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DR. PIERSON AND HIS MESSAGE

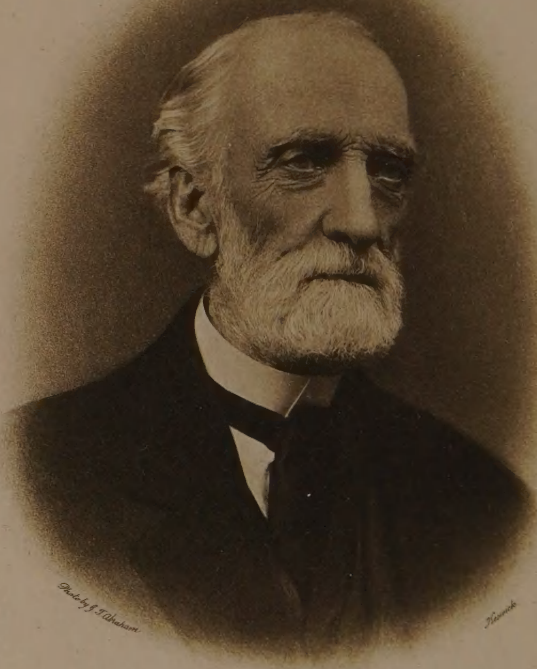
J. KENNEDY MACLEAN



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Dr. Pierson and His Message



Portrait of T. Peers

Peers

Arthur T. Peers

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Sermons

DR. PIERSON AND HIS MESSAGE

A Sketch of the Life and
Work of a Great Preacher,
together with a varied
selection from his
unpublished Manuscripts .

EDITED BY

J. KENNEDY MACLEAN

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I

Early Years and Ministry

ARTHUR TAPPAN PIERSON was one of God's choicest gifts to the Church of Christ during the latter part of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. He was a preacher by nature as well as by training. One would just as soon have expected the lark to cease from singing its joyous song amid the spacious heights as to think that Dr. Pierson could live without preaching. Like the ancient prophets who came straight from communion with God to declare the words He had given them to utter, he stood up with all the majesty of the Divine messenger, and, without faltering or apology, made known the whole truth as it is contained in the revealed Word of God. As we knew him in later years, there was something stern and severe in the appearance and manner of the tall, lithe figure, but behind the seemingly forbidding exterior there beat a heart of pity and love for those who were estranged from God and whom he was ever seeking to win back to the Father's fold. If he was severe in his denunciation of sin, his heart bled for the sinner. To him it was an enigma how men and women could continue in the path of wrongdoing and reject the Saviour's offer of mercy.

It has been said that Dr. Pierson's birth-place was curiously suggestive of his career, for it was in a house in Chatham-street, New York, built over an arched entrance to the chapel where Chas. G. Finney was preaching, and which had been known as the Chatham Street Theatre. The year of his birth, 1837, was the same as that of James Spurgeon, D. L. Moody, and John Wanamaker, with all of whom he was strangely associated in after years. Brought up in the centre of Christian surroundings, his heart was early inclined towards the Saviour, and he had not to pass through long years of agonising doubt and sin before finding peace. When a lad in New York, an awful scourge of cholera visited the city, and after the pestilence had departed, it was remarked by the pastor of the church of which he was then a member that, although hundreds and thousands within a short distance of the church had fallen victims of the awful disease, not one solitary church member of all that large communion had sickened or died. Such a wonderful occurrence as this made a lasting impression on the young and receptive mind of the future preacher, and when speaking of it in later years he used to say that while God does not assure us that any suffering essential to the maturing of the spiritual life and education for service would be spared us, even though we were His children, He did say to us that if we were abiding in Him, such scourges and such judgments, as represent the recompense that God administers to wicked and rebellious souls, shall not come near us, and that we need "not be afraid of the terror by night, nor the arrow that flieth by day."

Deciding in early life to serve God in the holy ministry, Dr. Pierson underwent the necessary scholastic preparations, and in 1857 graduated from Hamilton College. These days of study sowed the seed of that methodical habit of thought and practice which ever afterwards

characterised the distinguished preacher. Some men cease to study whenever the doors of the University close behind them. Dr. Pierson was a diligent student up to the very end of his life, and there is no doubt that the thorough training of his youthful years laid the foundations upon which he was subsequently able to build enduring monuments of research and industry.

Possessing a mind upon which impressions were easily formed, the young student was influenced by the men with whom he was brought into contact and by the circle in which he moved. Just as the cholera scourge already noted made an ineffaceable mark upon his memory, so did some of the incidents of his years at college sink deeply into his mind and influence the current of his life. "In my college life," he used to recall, "there were two young men who were mightily moved by the Spirit of God on the same night. They walked down to the chaplain's house, intending to go in and converse with him, and then in prayer to surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ. When they got to the gate, one said to the other, 'Jim, I think I won't go in,' and he resisted all persuasions, and parted at the gate. The man that went in and surrendered to Christ that night is one of the mightiest ministers of Christ in America to-day. The one that parted with him at the gate went into drink, into gambling and sensuality, went down to Cuba, and was identified there with some rebellion, where he was shot, and died in the midst of his sins. They parted for eternity at the gateway of the chaplain's house, and each man's future depended on the decision made at that moment."

In 1860 Dr. Pierson was ordained in the Thirteenth-street Presbyterian Church, New York City, and in the same year he was married. Thus last year (1910) were celebrated both the jubilee of his ministry and his golden wedding—a double event that brought to Dr. and Mrs.

Pierson many heart-felt congratulations from friends all over the world.

Dr. Pierson's first pastorate was at Binghamton, and ministeries at Waterford ; Fort Street Church, Detroit ; Second Church, Indianapolis, and the Bethany Church, Philadelphia, followed. To that anecdotal style of preaching, which is such a characteristic of our American brethren, we are indebted for many glimpses into the experiences of those early days of service in the Master's cause.

"I began my ministry with the confident impression that the Church is destined to convert the world in this age," Dr. Pierson has confessed. "I endeavoured to do my part in this work of world transformation, and I preached with all enthusiasm, ardour, and conviction, expecting to see my whole congregation converted. It was not ; here and there one was gathered out, and so it has continued all through the years of my ministry. I have rejoiced in seeing God's Spirit working, and converting many souls under my preaching, but I have never yet seen a whole congregation brought to Christ, and if any of my brethren have it must be a very exceptional case. Who would not be glad to take a pilgrimage to see a field where every hearer is also a believer, or a whole community has been transformed into a true church ? "

There is, perhaps, just a note of disappointment in this confession, but that is pardonable when we remember the enthusiasm that fills the soul of the young preacher with high ideas, and whose heart is so much on fire with holy passion that he cannot understand how anyone can possibly turn a deaf ear to the glorious invitation of the Gospel.

This was not the only direction, however, in which the icy chill of disappointment fell upon the warmth of

passionate zeal. In one of the congregations to which he ministered he was continually beset by opposition from some who claimed to be children of God, led on by worldly-minded men outside the church membership entirely. Of this experience Dr. Pierson could never speak without a sense of awe, for Divine chastisements were visited upon that band of opposers, and the lesson which Dr. Pierson learned from that trial was this, "It showed me the sacredness of the office of a Christian minister, and how we need not defend ourselves, but commit our defence unto the Lord God Almighty."

Another remarkable illustration of how, when we cultivate spiritual insight and spiritual instinct, we can depend upon God to interpose for us, is given as follows in Dr. Pierson's own striking words:—

"I was once in a church where there was a deadly feud between certain members and officers, and it was so bitter that the opposing parties would not even sit on the same side in the prayer-meeting room. After eighteen months of strenuous endeavours to heal the sore and get the contention out of the way, I said to the Lord, 'Thou hast put me here, and Thou art bound by Thy promise to stand by me. Now I have sought to remedy this difficulty, and I cannot, and I find this conflict facing me every way, and these antagonists have arrayed themselves against each other like hostile forces; now, Lord, either heal the breach, or remove out of the way the real offenders.' *And from the day that I offered that prayer not one of those offenders ever darkened that church door.* I speak of it in solemnity. I feel very solemn about it, but I want the witness to go to your hearts that the mighty God is on the side of any man who seeks to be filled with the Holy Ghost, to cultivate the insight into the Word, and the instincts of a spiritual man, and so to administer everything in the interests of God."

Of a different character was the following experience : —“ In my own life I was long inclined, from a training in business methods, and an undue confidence in my own sagacity, to undertake to manage matters myself. I learnt a better way ; and from that time have found no difficulty confronting me in my ministry for which there has not been found a Divine solution. I took charge of a church at one time, which was composed, for the most part, of the poorer and working classes, which had a terrible debt of £10,000 resting upon it. Feeling such a debt to be a reproach to Christ, I undertook, in the name of God, to raise it by voluntary offerings. It seemed to human eyes a hopeless task ; but, by the grace of God, it was accomplished inside of three years without friction, without disturbance, without oppressive taxation.”

From this Dr. Pierson used to commend to his brethren in the ministry that, in each Church of Jesus Christ, the minister should seek to associate with himself the most godly, devout, and holy men and women, in united prayer for great spiritual blessings ; that one of their number should be appointed a secretary, and that every subject deferentially presented before God in united prayer should be recorded, with the promise upon which the request was based, and the date when such prayer began to be made. Then, so fast as the petitions were granted, the answers should be with equal fidelity recorded, so that this Prayer Union (which might be a very small circle) within the Church of Christ, should demonstrate for mutual growth in faith and courage in waiting upon God how faithful God is in hearing and answering the prayers of His people.

Prayer with him was not a mere repetition of empty words, but the lifting up of the whole heart to God—the presenting of every need, not in the vain hope of its being heard, but in the fullest confidence of its being answered.

Like his dear friend, George Müller, in whose work he was so deeply interested, and whose life of faith he so beautifully portrayed in his biography of the orphans' friend, he had learned to lean upon God, and he knew that all the treasures of the Father's storehouse were at his disposal. Such an attitude as that laughs at "impossibilities," for with God human extremity is but the opportunity for Divine aid and deliverance.

From what has already been said, it is obvious that Dr. Pierson was conscientious in discharging all the duties of the ministry, and that in him the business and the spiritual elements were beautifully and successfully blended. He never was, as some men profess to be, so deeply engrossed in heavenly matters as to be oblivious to the claims of earth; with him the two were inseparably related, and while he laboured in a power not his own, and sought the guidance of the Spirit in every detail, he was wise enough to understand that human preparation and organisation have a place in the economy of God's work, and that to neglect them is an evidence not of intense spirituality but of laziness and indifference.

For example, Dr. Pierson believed and said that a great lack in our church life is that of complete organisation. "We knew well a prominent pastor in one of the Western cities who was perpetually urging his people to engage in beneficent activities, but who was so utterly deficient in devising and dividing labour that, when approached after his own discourses by those who were ready to engage in work for Christ, he was absolutely unable to direct them in what way to bestow their activities. Fortunately the economy of all well-organised churches does not leave the pastor to do this work of organisation alone. He has his eldership, or his board of deacons, or his committee men, to assist him in the forming and perfecting of this mechanism of church activity, and he should associate

with himself the largest number of wise, sagacious, active men and women in the congregation as the pastor's working council. They should with him develop modes of activity, and apportion work to every man, woman, and child willing to engage in it. I have found it of great personal value to me, in the pastorate of American churches, to unite the trustees, elders, and deacons in such a pastor's council, and with them to mature the methods of work to be recommended to the congregation for their adoption. Such a plan has a higher value in this, that each member of such a board of councillors represents a coterie of personal friends and acquaintances in the congregation, over whom he has more or less influence, and whom he can induce personally to take part in the organised work of the congregation."

This attention to detail and this regard for the proper working of the machinery associated with church life and work, were marks of that well-ordered mind that believed in doing everything as perfectly as possible. In his plan there was no room for the sloth, no place for the diletante; the labourers in the great vineyard must have zeal for service and be whole-hearted in their devotion. And what he expected from others in exactitude and merit of service, he gladly rendered himself. Dr. Pierson was thorough in method. He made rules for himself before he had been very long in the ministry, and he obeyed them with unflinching faithfulness. He worked on a system. He prepared for emergencies. At the beginning of his ministerial life, foreseeing that demands would be frequently made upon him for public lectures and addresses, on general occasions, he framed several discourses on popular and useful themes, and was accustomed to use them from time to time, making such changes in the elaboration of the various departments and illustrations of thought as his own mental growth and increasing

intelligence or the surrounding circumstances might allow; and he found these to be exceedingly useful to him, being oftentimes called upon with very little or no notice. These lay in the mind and memory as the general foundation for addresses for which no special preparation could be made, and prevented his ever appearing before an audience without being able to present a definite message.

It was this same regard for careful method and precision that accustomed him, during the later years of his pastorate, to carry about with him a book for permanent record, in which he put down, in cipher, all the facts which affected the personal and family life of his congregation, which he was able in any way to ascertain. For instance, he would inquire where the members of each family were born; whether there were any special besetting sins in the children, known to the parents; whether any children had been specially consecrated to God from birth, etc. He would inquire and record about those who had died in the family circle; their ages and circumstances; and about members of the family living in other parts; about aged grandparents and their infirmities; about members of the household who belonged to other churches and communions; about those who had any physical infirmities or deformities—in a word, ascertain, as far as he could, facts of the family history. This enabled him to pray intelligently for his people; and before he repeated a call, he would look over his memoranda, so as to be enabled to converse intelligently and sympathetically; and he found that this method of getting at the inmost history of his people was an invaluable source of power to him in reaching their souls.

There we have a glimpse of the ardent soul-winner who did not regard his pulpit ministrations as the only way of

reaching the hearts and consciences of the people, but who made use of every means in his power to come into the closest personal contact with all whom he desired to influence. His was a high sense of duty and of responsibility, and nobly did he fulfil every function of his holy office.

II

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle

THE combination of circumstances associated with Dr. Pierson's ministry at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London leaves no doubt whatever that he occupied the pulpit by Divine appointment. It was no easy task to step into the breach occasioned by the illness, and subsequently by the death, of that prince of preachers, Mr. C. H. Spurgeon, but the man who is commissioned to undertake a duty forgets himself in the discharge of his task.

So it was with Dr. Pierson. There was no pulpit in all the world so renowned as that from which Mr. Spurgeon week after week and year after year delivered the wonderful sermons that found their way literally by the million into every quarter of the globe, and to step into the fierce light that beat upon the Tabernacle and all its affairs was an ordeal from which almost any man would have shrunk. But Dr. Pierson, looking away from himself and only at the Master whom he served, shouldered the responsibilities of the Tabernacle ministry, and marched forward in full dependence upon the Spirit of God.

He was not entirely a stranger to the congregation when, towards the close of 1891, he began his temporary

ministry in London. Two years earlier he had preached at the Tabernacle, and the impression made upon his mind on the occasion of that last visit is reflected in the article which appeared shortly afterwards in the pages of his own magazine, "The Missionary Review of the World."

"This Metropolitan Tabernacle is a *house of prayer* most emphatically," Dr. Pierson writes. "Here are numerous rooms, under and around the great audience-room, where for almost forty years this one servant of God has held forth the Word of Life; and in these rooms prayer is almost ceaselessly going up. When one meeting is not in progress, another is. This is a hive of bees, where there are comparatively few drones. There are prayer meetings before preaching, and others after preaching; Evangelistic Associations, Zenana Societies, and all sorts of work for God find here a centre, and all are consecrated by prayer. Before the preacher goes upon the platform to address these thousands, the officers of this great church meet him and each other for prayer as to the service; and one feels upborne on these strong arms of prayer while preaching. No marvel that Mr. Spurgeon's ministry has been so blessed. He himself attributes it mainly to the prevailing prayers of his people. Why may not the whole Church of God learn something from the Metropolitan Tabernacle of London as to the power of simple Gospel preaching backed by believing supplication?"

"Referring to this great church, one cannot forget also this divine mission as a standing protest against the secularising of the house of God by the attractions of worldly art and æstheticism. Here is nothing to divert the mind from the simplicity of worship and the Gospel; no attempt at elaborate architecture, furniture, garniture. A precentor leads congregational song without even the

help of a cornet ; prayer and praise, and the reading of the Word of God, with plain putting of Gospel truth—these have been Mr. Spurgeon's lifelong ' means of grace ' and weapons of war.

"This lesson has, in my opinion, a bearing on all work for Christ, at home and abroad. Our reliance is too much *on the charms of this world*, in drawing souls to the Gospel and to the Saviour. The Holy Spirit will not tolerate our idols. If we will have artistic and secular types of music, substituting unsanctified art for simple praise ; if we will have elaborate ritual in place of simple, believing prayer, if we will have eloquent lectures in place of simple, earnest Gospel preaching, we must not wonder if no shekinah fires burn in our sanctuaries. If Ahaz is allowed to displace God's plain altar by the carved, idolatrous altar from Damascus, we need not be surprised if God withdraws His power. Perhaps the reason why the work of God abroad shows more sign of His presence and power than our sanctuary services at home is in part this, that our foreign mission work has never been embarrassed as yet by those elaborate attempts at æsthetic attractions which turn many of our home churches into concert-halls and lecture-saloons, and costly club-houses. May God grant us to learn, once for all, that nothing in our mission work can make up for Holy Spirit power, and that Holy Spirit power itself makes up for the lack of all else. If the angel troubles the pool, there is healing in the waters ; but if God's angel comes not down, all the doctors in Jerusalem, with all the drugs in creation, cannot impart healing virtue."

In 1891 Mr. Spurgeon was laid aside by illness, the heavy duties at the Tabernacle overcoming at last his physical strength, and necessitating a respite from the strain of his busy ministry. Ordered abroad by his medical advisers, he was naturally anxious that his

congregation should not suffer by his absence, and the problem of a capable substitute was much in his thoughts. Early in the month of August he remembered that Dr. Pierson had kindly offered to come to London at any time when his services might be required, and writing to his friend he inquired whether his engagements would permit of his coming to England. The very next morning, to show how the hand of the Lord was working in the matter, a loving letter was received from Dr. Pierson in which, among other helpful words, were the following: "If by coming across the sea I could now serve you, I would cheerfully do all in my power." To this a reply was at once sent, and the return mail brought the following confirmation of the belief that the proposal was of the Lord:—

"My beloved in the Lord, dearest Spurgeon,—Your most loving letter of August 7th has just reached me, forwarded from my city address. Please do not 'Reverend' or 'Doctor' me! I am not as reverend as you are, for I am only fifty-four, and you are a little more venerable; and, as to the doctoring, you unhappily need it more than I. Now, henceforth let me be plain Pastor Pierson!

"As to the contents of your letter, I fell on my knees—there was in all this a touch of the supernatural, and I was overawed.

"First of all, I was unexpectedly called to preach in the Tabernacle, Dec. 6, 1889; and never had I felt such divine uplifting; the atmosphere of prayer and of the Holy Ghost was there, and those blessed men of prayer all about me, and the conscious demand of the congregation for the plain Word of God, with no chaff of science and art and human wisdom, falsely so-called; I felt that such a congregation and environment evoked the best there was in me, and that such eloquent hearing would make any man mighty to preach. And so it pained me

to be unable to comply with after-appeals by letter and telegram asking me to preach again, for I felt that nowhere on earth would I so gladly hold forth the Word of Life. And then my deep love for Pastor Spurgeon, nourished through many years, and increasing day by day, led me to feel it a divine joy to do anything to help you, for no man on earth has ever had more of my love and sympathy than you. Every utterance of tongue or pen has an echo in my heart, and especially in this *Greatest Fight in the World*.

“Well, now—listen; for the first time, I think, since I began to preach at twenty years of age, I am entirely free of all positive engagements from October 1st; my last appointment to preach, thus far, is September 27. By some strange leading I have been made to keep clear of all embarrassing promises and pledges; and though it will upset all my supposed and presumed course, I cannot offer at present any insuperable barrier to my coming and preaching for you, from about the middle of October, indefinitely. I know not what I may be able to cable you, for I feel that I must write fully on a subject so grave. It is of supreme consequence for me only to *do the will of God*, and that can be known only in answer to believing prayer. My counsel is, that you call your deacons together, and, after earnest prayer, ascertain by their unanimous voice what is the divine mind. I am making this matter one of fasting and prayer; and if your mind, and theirs, and my own, are led in the same direction, I will accept it as a token of God’s will, and come with joy to you.

“My hesitation is due, not so much to the necessary doubt investing such a manifest interruption of my ordinary work, which, like other men’s, runs in the ruts of habit; but I cannot but hesitate for clear signs of the divine will, before daring to take up a work so

vast, and of issues possibly so momentous. To enter such a field, and there labour at this critical time, when the whole people have been chastened, and the soil is mellow and ready for the sowing,—I simply *dare not*, unless I am thrust into it and anointed anew for the work by the Master Himself.”

Three days after writing the above, Dr. Pierson cabled :—Acts xvi. 9, 10. The passage runs thus—“And a vision appeared to Paul in the night : There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the Gospel unto them.”

In due course, the deacons met, and unanimously agreed to the proposal ; it was afterwards approved by the elders ; and on final details being arranged, October 25th was fixed as the date of Dr. Pierson's first services at the Tabernacle. “We trust”—said the official organ of the Tabernacle at the time—“that his coming will indeed be like Paul's mission to Macedonia, and that not only will believers be edified and strengthened, but that many under his ministry may be brought out of darkness into light.”

Believing that blessing received is in proportion to the faith expecting it, Dr. Pierson entered upon his work in London with every confidence of a harvest season. To this belief he gave utterance in some of the first words spoken by him from the Tabernacle pulpit. “Do you expect a blessing ?” he asked. “Then you will prepare your heart for it. May I say that I expect a blessing ? I never would have come those three thousand miles across the stormy Atlantic, and have left all the work in America that was at my hands, to preach in this Tabernacle, had I not been confident that God called me, and

meant, through this poor ministry of mine, to second the glorious testimony of Pastor Spurgeon, and that I should come to a prepared people. And I want solemnly to say that, if we do not have a blessing, it will be our own fault; for God is great and rich in mercy, and the Holy Ghost is even now hovering over this assembly like a dove at a window; and if we will open the window the Holy Dove will come in."

This expectation was realised from the very beginning. Mr. Spurgeon, before his departure for Mentone, had spoken of the rest of heart which he enjoyed in leaving Tabernacle affairs in the hands of "our beloved brother, Dr. Pierson," adding those significant words:—"It was according to the wonder-working way of God to have such a man in reserve while we were laid aside. No one could be more competent, or more suitable; no one could display a more unselfish desire to serve the cause of God, or a more loving concern to help a brother in his hour of need. It is marvellous how greatly we coincide in thought and feeling: the two ministries have dovetailed into each other, and we are indeed one." And so the ministry, begun amid such mutual love and confidence, and in an atmosphere warm with prayer, was wonderfully marked by the Divine favour. In undiminished crowds the people flocked to the house of God, and the joy of reaping gladdened the heart of the preacher from over the sea.

Meantime, while every department of the Tabernacle was maintaining its activities under the guiding hand of Dr. Pierson, the beloved pastor was resting by the sunny shore of the Mediterranean, gradually gaining strength and, as far as human eye could see, getting ready for a resumption of his labours in the centre of London's teeming millions. He hoped to be "home in February." And he was, in a much more real sense than was supposed by any of those who heard the words, for with the coming of

that month there flashed across the world the sad intelligence that, on January 31st, 1892, C. H. Spurgeon had gone to his reward.

Throughout the dark and trying days that followed, Dr. Pierson stood like a giant, strong in faith, and preaching the steadying and inspiring messages that were needed in the hours of crisis. "During the life of the great pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle," one of the officials has said to me, "there were many who were filled with apprehension as to what would happen after his decease, for his master had guided and controlled, not only the great Church, but the important institutions connected with it, and when he was called to his rest, the Church was staggered and bewildered by the calamity. Loyally and faithfully, Dr. Pierson stepped into the breach and gave himself unreservedly in the service of the Church; throughout the ordeal of the funeral and memorial services, without faltering, he maintained the great work, until time began to heal the sense of bereavement and distraction, and thus he guided the great ship into smoother water."

The memory of Dr. Pierson's faith, courage, and healing ministry during that period of sorrow and bereavement is still gratefully cherished at the Tabernacle. If, after the congregation worshipping there began to accustom itself to its altered circumstances, there were some who forgot their debt to him, and attributed unworthy motives to disinterested service, it was but a modern illustration of the experience of the "poor wise man" recorded in the Book of Ecclesiastes. Into the unhappy episodes I need not enter, but I have it on the authority of one well acquainted with all the circumstances, that Dr. Pierson made "efforts to restore harmony to an extent that many might consider derogatory in his fervent desire that the cause of Christ might

not suffer disrepute by real or imaginary disunion within its borders."

At the Tabernacle and elsewhere there were many who would have liked to see Dr. Pierson succeed Mr. Spurgeon in the permanent pastorate of the Church, but that was not God's purpose for His servant. And so, the mission which had brought him to London having been fulfilled, he resumed other duties, with twenty years of glorious service still ahead.

III

The Work of Later Years

THOUGH Dr. Pierson occupied no settled pastorate during the closing twenty years of his life, his ministry was world-wide in its scope, in large measure through his books, and he left his impress on many departments of religious work. In no field, perhaps, did he labour with deeper earnestness than in that of foreign missions. The tremendous need of the mission field ever loomed up before him with pathetic appeal; he saw vast areas of the world's surface untouched by the saving presence of the missionary, and his heart yearned with a passionate earnestness to send the Gospel to the great multitudes who sat in the gloomy darkness of heathenism. Voice and pen were devoted to furthering the interests of the cause of Christ in foreign lands, and not only did he seek to awaken the interest in the Church, but he gave that which is often hardest to give, his own children to missionary labours, one of them dying at her post in India, another sacrificing his health in the tropics of Central America; a third has laboured among the Indians in the South-west of America; a fourth assists her husband in Christian settlement work in one of the large cities in the United States, while the eldest son was associated with his father in the conduct of his missionary magazine.

This intense interest in the cause of missions was not a plant of late growth. For twenty-five years he was editor of *The Missionary Review of the World*, and one of his own countrymen has declared that "it is generally conceded that there is no living writer on Christian missions the equal of Dr. Arthur T. Pierson, in fulness of knowledge, in enthusiasm and earnestness of spirit, and in charm and power of treatment." Before he left America in 1891, to enter upon the temporary pastorate of the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, he prepared a "Solemn League and Covenant" in order to create a fresh concern in the cause of missions and to lead to a practical support of them.

That "League and Covenant" was in the following practical terms:—

"Who of God's people are ready to join in an agreement of prayer to carry out some such solemn confession of duty, faith, and privilege as the following ?

"We, the undersigned, deeply feeling the reproach and dishonour of the Church of Christ in the long neglect of the perishing millions of our race, and the selfish hoarding and spending of money which has been committed to disciples as stewards; and painfully conscious that unbelief has led to the still worse neglect of believing prayer in behalf of a world's evangelisation, do, in the name of Jesus, declare our deep conviction that it is the duty and privilege of the disciples of Christ to bear the Gospel message to the whole race of man with all possible promptness; that every believer is responsible before God for the carrying out of our Lord's last command; that the avenues of self-indulgence should be closed, that we may have the more to give to those that need; that we ourselves should be ready to go wherever we are sent, and to send others where we may not go; that our children should be consecrated, from the first,

unto God's service, and encouraged to cherish the spirit of missions. And we are especially impressed that daily and believing prayer should be offered for the speedy evangelisation of this world and the coming of the kingdom of God. We believe it is the privilege of all true believers to implore God for the speedy outpourings of His Spirit in a world-wide Pentecost of power.

"And in this faith we do solemnly undertake, in holy agreement before God, however widely separated from each other, to meet each other at the throne of grace in the early morning hours of each day in earnest and importunate prayer."

Again and again he uttered warnings to the Church of Christ, pointing out its duty with regard to missionary work in foreign parts, and no one could listen to his clarion calls without realising how real was the passion that stirred his soul. As recently as August last, 1910, in spite of the weakness that was then leaving its mark upon the faithful servant, he spoke at the Northfield Conference on "The Incredible Facts of Modern Missions," emphasising in that address the fact that God is working a great work in our day and calling upon Christian men and women to recognise His working and rise to their responsibility.

"If," he added, "the Church fails Him in these days, He will cast it aside and raise up another people to do His will, as He did with the Israelites at Kadesh-Barnea, that was so near the land of promise that it is not quite certain whether it was inside the border. In a few hours they could have entered and taken possession; but because they were afraid to face the giant sons of Anak, and were so unbelieving and hard-hearted that they were even going to stone Caleb for encouraging them to go forward, God turned them back into the desert for thirty-nine years, till they all left their carcasses in the

wilderness. If the Church of God in this generation does not arise to the work of the world's evangelisation, He will cast us aside and raise up another generation to do His will."

Then he closed with this appeal, showing how even to the last he was striving to awaken the individual and the Church to a real sense of their responsibility to the unevangelised world:—

"Thousands and millions of people have not yet seen a missionary nor heard the first proclamation of the Gospel. This assembly room has in it as many as equal one-eighth of the missionary forces in the world that the Christian Church sends unto heathen and papal countries. We do not know what consecration is or what giving is. I want to see the day when people beget and bear and rear children for the mission field; when they restrict their expenses for the sake of having more to give; when believers limit their indulgences, forego fine houses, collections of art and of books, and all forms of needless outlay for temporal things for the sake of the spiritual welfare of a lost race. I beseech you, take this matter into new consideration before Almighty God, and do not sleep until you have communed with the Wonder Worker of our day, and have solemnly asked Him, 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?'"

With such a fire as this glowing perpetually in his breast, one can readily understand how eagerly he welcomed the awakening of college students to the cause of foreign missions in 1886, when the Student Volunteer Movement was founded at Mount Hermon. Much of the inspiration of this movement was derived from Dr. Pierson himself, who was in attendance upon the conference at Northfield, and was associated with the small group of men, including Robert Wilder and John Forman, who inaugurated the world-wide enterprise. During the

earlier years of the movement Dr. Pierson was present and took part in nearly all their leading conferences both in this country and in America.

No review of Dr. Pierson's life, however lengthy, could do anything like justice to his labours on behalf of missions, but it is worth recalling the fact that in 1888, at the great London Missionary Conference, he delivered a memorable address, giving a general survey of modern missions, in the course of which he pressed home the thought that in connection with this enterprise the greatest need was the need of a revival of faith in the supernatural. In the month of July that same year, in association with his fellow-countryman, the late Dr. A. J. Gordon, of Boston, he addressed a series of meetings in Edinburgh; and this was followed by a campaign in which these two honoured brethren visited quite a number of centres in Scotland, speaking everywhere on missions with much acceptance.

With another branch of Christian activity in this country Dr. Pierson was intimately associated—the Müller Orphanage at Bristol. His association with that wonderful man of God began during one of Mr. Müller's preaching tours in the United States, Dr. Pierson at that time being minister at a church in Philadelphia. Close and prolonged seasons of prayer and Bible reading which they had together bound them to one another in affectionate relationships, and the ties then formed were only broken when, in 1898, Mr. Müller was called to his reward. Dr. Pierson was a frequent visitor at the Bristol Homes, and in the two biographies, "George Müller, of Bristol," and "James Wright, of Bristol," he paid tribute to the devoted services of those two men of God on behalf of the homeless and the destitute orphans.

All who had the privilege of being acquainted with Dr. Pierson in his home life speak of the beautiful devotion

of husband to wife and of wife to husband. Joined together in marriage in 1860, they enjoyed half a century of unbroken happiness, the growing years but drawing them into closer unity of heart and spirit and rendering their married life the perfect ideal of what all true marriage should be. Last summer they celebrated their golden wedding—celebrated it quietly and happily at beautiful Northfield, redolent with memories of D. L. Moody and the centre to-day of Bible conferences and schools that have made, and are making, their mark upon the religious life and thought of the world. The Rev. J. Stuart Holden was privileged to join with Mr. and Mrs. W. R. Moody in an otherwise almost entirely family gathering, and he says that never shall he forget the happiness of that summer afternoon. “With sparkling wit, striking epigram, and interesting reminiscence, the Doctor entertained and amused us all, and his tender and almost patriarchal greeting and blessing of his guests was like a benediction.”

To the “beloved friends, everywhere,” of Mrs. Pierson and himself there was sent “with grateful affection,” a little souvenir of the happy event, couched in the following terms:—

“Our Golden Jubilee was quietly kept with the family circle at ‘Heerrnhut,’ our Northfield summer home.

“We had issued no announcements or invitations, wishing to avoid all publicity, for obvious reasons; but, notwithstanding, we were the recipients of not a few generous gifts, and very many precious messages of love and salutation, by letter or telegram. Feeling unequal to the individual acknowledgement of all these acts of kindness, we ask our friends to accept this simple memorial of the occasion, and response to their congratulations as a personal tribute, with thanks for their gracious ministries of many years, and fervent prayers for

their joyful gathering with us and all the Church of God at the Marriage Supper of the King."

Upon the inside pages of this memorial were reproduced portraits of Dr. and Mrs. Pierson at the time of their wedding, together with portraits taken just before their jubilee, and also the following lines in verse giving their testimony to the Lord's goodness during the half century they had been together in the sacred relationship of husband and wife :—

With fifty years of wedded Love and Life
Our Father God has crowned us—Husband, Wife—
With two sons and five daughters Home was blest,
One only—dear "Louise"—yet called to rest,
For all these golden years, and sunlit ways,
We ask our friends to join our hymn of praise ;
No gifts we crave so much as priceless Love,
And prayers in our behalf to God above ;
That, if awhile His grace prolongs our stay
His pillar may direct our pilgrim way,
Then bid us welcome to His Home on high,
Where Love is throned and Joy can never die.
Blessed indeed, from Sin and Death made free
In Heaven to keep the Golden Jubilee !

The fiftieth anniversary of Dr. Pierson's ordination to the ministry falling in the same year, it occurred to some of his friends that it was a fitting time to undertake some form of a memorial to him, and it was proposed that a Missionary Bible Lectureship should be founded. The occasion seemed appropriate also for making a missionary tour that had long been in contemplation, and in Dr. Pierson's own magazine the following details were given :—

"After receiving many pressing invitations to visit the Orient, and bear testimony to the truth, the Editor-in-chief has now made plans for a trip to the mission fields of Asia, returning by Egypt and the Mediterranean.

He expects to sail from Vancouver on October 19th on the *Empress of Japan*, and plans to reach London in time for the Keswick Convention in July, 1911. The itinerary, so far as complete, embraces Japan, Korea, China, Siam, India, Burma, and Ceylon, and probably Egypt. Arrangements are being made for services with the missionaries and English-speaking Christians in India during January and February, 1911. The editor will also be ready, as far as is desired and possible, to meet with missionaries in other lands. He expects to be in Japan and Korea in November; in Manchuria and China in December; in Siam, Burma, and then India, from about January 1st to March 1st, and in Egypt from March 15th to April 15th, approximately.

“The purpose of this tour is to accomplish several ends: First, to glean information at first hand about the actual state and needs of the mission fields; second, to encourage and stimulate the missionaries and native churches; third, to strengthen faith in the inspired Word of God and loyalty to our divine Redeemer; and, finally, in every way to build up the cause of Bible study and missionary enterprise.”

The tour began according to arrangement, but it was not to end as planned. The voyage, to begin with, was exceedingly rough, and in his weak state of health Dr. Pierson suffered severely in consequence. Mr. Ralph Walker, who sailed from British Columbia with Dr. Pierson and his wife and daughter, tells me that even before the voyage began he was much impressed by his friend's weakness and frailty, and thought him totally unfit to endure the fatigues and inconveniences of Eastern life. At first he maintained his strength, but as they got into a colder climate and the sea grew rough, he became utterly prostrate, and twice on going to his cabin Mr. Walker found him so prostrate that he was not sure

whether he was alive or not. But when one day's comparative calm and sunshine broke the weariness of the storm, it brought with it new life and hope, and Dr. Pierson walked the deck with his friend till the latter was quite tired out.

Again and again, Dr. Pierson's splendid spirit overcame his bodily weakness, and when he reached Japan his courage and zeal often led him to speak to the students and others with a power which he ever exercised in his witness for the Master. But in Korea he found the conditions far from favourable, the intense cold, combined with the lack of heating arrangements in the houses, causing him much suffering and adding to the weakness which became more marked as the days went by. And yet, his letters to his friends in this country were for a time bright and hopeful. He expected to reach London about the month of April and offered to occupy once more the pulpit at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, should the Church still be without a pastor.

Later letters, however, gave rise to much anxiety amongst his friends. When last in England, two years earlier, Dr. Pierson had seemed considerably weaker than usual. Up till then his years had sat lightly upon him, but at the Keswick Convention of 1909 he appeared to be tired and worn out; and as the news of his illness reached us from Korea there stole into many hearts the fear, justified by events, that never again would we see the loved form or listen to the voice that had so often in years gone by thrilled and inspired us with its message.

Writing to the Rev. Evan H. Hopkins towards the end of the year, and addressing him as "My Beloved Friend and Brother," he said, "You will see from this letter that I am about as far from my home as I can ever be on earth. As soon as my health is sufficiently restored, after a very tempestuous sea voyage, I expect to press on to

Shanghai and thence to Calcutta and so on, to London, where, if God spares my life, I hope to meet you about April 1st and have much to say to you when we meet, which I cannot take time for now and have no strength to write or even to dictate. . . . My heart goes out to you in special affection. There is no man in Great Britain whom I more long to see, and with whom I should consider it a greater privilege just now to have fellowship and conversation. If I am spared to again see you, I have countless matters of which to speak. After writing for forty years upon the subject of missions, and delivering countless addresses and reading almost countless books, I have had more impression made upon my mind by a few weeks in Japan and Korea than all the previous years have made, so great is the power of vision to produce impression. . . .

"I have heard nothing up to this time about the 'Pierson Lectureship' which was proposed in connection with my Jubilee; whether the amount was raised and the project realised I do not know; but in any case, I am trying to act as the first incumbent of the Lectureship, and up to the limits of my strength am making addresses wherever I go along the Keswick lines. Will you commend me to God in your daily prayer, remembering me to Mrs. Hopkins with peculiar affection and to all the brethren?"

To this typewritten letter was added a postscript in the Doctor's own handwriting. "The itinerary I have been compelled to abandon" he wrote, "as my really critical illness here has delayed me by heart weakness, and for the present I have *suspended all plans*, quietly waiting further disclosures of the will of God. The doctors here advise me not to think of further shift until *balance* is restored. The suppressed sea-sickness broke up the 'compensation' for deficient heart action (which they

say has been going on for years), and until this compensatory action is recovered further travel is out of question.

“It would be to me an unspeakable blessing if a few like-minded brethren who can prevail in prayer, could meet with you, definitely to ask in agreement for my recovery. Twelve years ago, after blood poisoning, a dozen brethren met at the house of James Wright, in Bristol, and spent two hours in prayer for me; and, since then, see what I have been able to accomplish! Another crisis has come, and things impossible with man are possible with God.”

From this letter we see that Dr. Pierson's condition had become much worse, and that he himself realised the exceedingly critical nature of the illness. But hope was not yet abandoned, for “things impossible with man are possible with God.” He knew that he was in God's hands, and there he was content to remain.

As soon as he was able to leave Korea, Dr. Pierson, abandoning the remainder of his tour, sailed for America, and reaching his own country he remained for a couple of months in the kindly atmosphere of the Pacific Coast at Los Angeles. The messages despatched to his friends from there were few in number and brief in their contents. They were written by his daughter and gave reports of the patient's progress. They were not very alarming, and neither were they reassuring; between the lines one could easily see that the life of the great preacher and teacher was hanging in the balance. Then came the news of the sufferer's journey home to Brooklyn. The very fact of his having faced the long distance by rail seemed to suggest some improvement in his condition, but a cabled message in the daily newspapers of June 5th, stating that the honoured servant of God had entered into his rest two days earlier, intimated to all who knew and loved him

that his warfare on earth was over and that he had entered into the presence of the King.

The end when it came was really unexpected, for up till the closing week of his life he was doing editorial work, and on the night before his death the doctor and nurse both declared that he was better. But early next morning it was seen that a serious change had taken place. The patient was unconscious and sinking. A telephone message summoning Mr. Delavan Pierson to his father's bedside was despatched with all speed, but before he had time to answer the call, at five minutes to eight o'clock, the aged servant of the Lord stopped breathing, and passed quietly away without regaining consciousness. The funeral services on Tuesday afternoon, June 6th, at which Dr. Speer and Dr. Jowett spoke, were of a truly remarkable character, the whole tone being of praise and victory. Many people said they had never attended such a funeral.

"Nothing is here for tears," said the aged Manoah when they brought to him the news that Samson was dead. And there is "nothing for tears" in the translation of Dr. Pierson: rather would we thank God for such a gift to His Church, and for a long life lived so well and nobly lived in the service of his Lord and Master.

IV

Dr. Pierson's Keswick Ministry

THOUGH Dr. Pierson's association with Keswick did not go back over very many years, it was chiefly through his connection with that movement that he was known in this country, and it was at Keswick, perhaps, more than anywhere else that he possessed his kingdom and occupied the sphere fitting his great gifts. There he dominated the Convention by his spiritual and intellectual powers, and thousands hung upon his words with an intense eagerness for instruction and help that was never disappointed.

It was comparatively late in life before he accepted the teaching for which the Convention stands. Throughout the whole of his ministerial career the Bible was to him the one Book that stood in splendid isolation above all others. With an enthusiasm that never lagged, and with an industry amazing in its completeness, he dug deeply in the Divine quarry, bringing to light its valuable metals and ever finding some new and wondrous gem that had escaped the eye of his fellow-workers in the same precious field. In this way he obtained a unique mastery of the sacred writings, but yet with all his wonderful and almost unequalled acquaintance with the Divine treasury, there were certain truths which he had failed to appropriate experimentally, and thus, while giving intellectual

assent to them, he was without that intimate personal acquaintance which is absolutely essential to him who would lead others into the full measure of blessing.

To the Rev. Prebendary Webb-Peploe I am indebted for some light concerning Dr. Pierson's introduction to some doctrines which he afterwards proclaimed with such zeal and earnestness. Attending, by invitation of Mr. D. L. Moody, the Northfield Convention in America, in 1895, Prebendary Webb-Peploe there met Dr. Pierson for the first time, and as they sat side by side on the platform while the meetings were in progress, the two eminent Bible teachers became intimately acquainted, and had much personal intercourse during all the time they were together at the Conference.

"Dr. Pierson was not speaking much, if at all, at that Convention," Prebendary Webb-Peploe said to me in describing that first meeting-time at Northfield, "so that I did not then discern or enter into his wonderful power as an expositor of the Word of God, nor did I then know how, in the wonderful providence of God, my own poor words were used by the Lord for the spiritual help of my learned brother, but, on three different occasions in public meetings in England, I afterwards heard him say that in August, 1895, the Lord graciously opened his eyes to see the spiritual force and power of truths which he had theoretically known for many years, but the blessing and power of which he had not personally received, and it was through his friend Mr. Webb-Peploe that this light was given."

This crisis in Dr. Pierson's spiritual experience left its mark upon all his subsequent ministry. A new note of entreaty characterised his preaching, and he emphasised, as he had never done before, the necessity of complete consecration on the part of Christians. Following upon this experience, it was not long before he came into close

touch with Keswick, and very soon he was standing upon its platform and leading others into the paths of personal holiness where lie the richest blessings which God has to bestow upon His children.

Dr. Pierson's first visit to Keswick was in the year 1897, and regarding that convention I find the following reference in the *LIFE OF FAITH* :—" One of the most deeply interesting meetings was the Testimony Meeting, held on Friday afternoon in the Tent, and presided over by Mr. Hopkins. Personal testimonies were given by the Rev. Francis Paynter, Rev. Mr. Roscoe (Uganda), and Dr. A. T. Pierson. As Dr. Elder Cumming remarked in prayer, it must have cost our brethren a great deal to give those testimonies. Dr. Pierson told how he had been led through a series of experiences which had transformed his character and his life. Many eyes on the platform, as well as in the general audience, were filled with tears as Dr. Pierson gave this testimony to the grace of God."

In the pages of the *LIFE OF FAITH*, Dr. Pierson described " Keswick as seen near at Hand." " It was," he said, " a satisfaction, after watching this spiritual movement for twenty years from without, to have a providential opportunity to observe and study it from within ; and the visit of 1897 has been productive of gratifying results." Very sympathetically indeed did Dr. Pierson write about what he had seen and heard during that memorable time in his experience, and he left Keswick, " where the Creator has fashioned such an amphitheatre of grandeur," with the impression that, apart from all its material advantages, " Keswick Conventions have no real rival, and as gatherings for the promotion of practical holiness in living, and power in serving, we have yet seen nothing on either side of the water that furnishes any proper parallel."

A month or two later, in the columns of his own

magazine, *The Missionary Review of the World*, Dr. Pierson entered more fully into his introduction to the movement with which he was subsequently so closely identified. There he stated that in April of that year (1897) an important convention was held in London, at which the leading Keswick teachers of the city and vicinity gave careful and candid expositions of the truth which they held and advocated, part of the purpose of this convention being to furnish, in the metropolis of the world, an authoritative statement of this teaching, correcting misapprehension, and bringing these precious and vitalising truths into touch with many who had never been at Keswick itself during the Convention week. The way was singularly and providentially opened for him to attend this London Convention, and then to remain in England, holding a series of meetings, until the Keswick gathering itself; "so that a visit of some four or five months had its beginning and ending in connection with these two memorable weeks, each of which was occupied with the advocacy of these grand truths of grace and godliness. The opportunity referred to was gladly embraced, for there were some doubts that only such personal attendance at Keswick meetings could dissipate, and there was a strong desire to 'spy out the land,' and find out what weak points, if any, there were in the teaching now inseparable from the name of Keswick."

We have already seen the effect of that visit, and we know what a warm place Keswick had in his heart from that time on.

To the very end of his life Keswick continued to be very near his heart, and he always regarded it as a special privilege to minister to the vast crowds which yearly visit the little town up among the Cumberland hills in order to find the spiritual power and blessing that are needed for the enrichment and worship of service.

How whole-heartedly he entered into the movement was evidenced in many ways, for he recognised in its teaching the cure for many of the ailments with which the Christian Church is afflicted. In his little book, "The Story of Keswick," he laments the "present status of the Christian Church and the so-called Christian world," and the conclusion at which he arrives is this: "That to build up missions so that the structure shall risk no collapse, we must look well to the base—in the individual as well as the collective church life. We must press home on the believer the demand for personal holiness. The Word of God must be restored to its supreme place as the inspired, infallible testimony of God; the personality and power of the Holy Spirit, the indispensableness of Christ to human salvation, the universal priesthood of believers and the need of a simple and spiritual worship, the call to separation and self-denial for Christ and the neglected hope of the Lord's coming—these and like truths must be preached, taught, driven home to the conscience until God's people are brought into personal, living, loving sympathy with Himself."

That Dr. Pierson himself taught them with a conviction of purpose, and in the power of the Holy Spirit every one will admit. At many of the Conventions he was one of the stalwarts who had always a message for the hungry multitudes and who fed them out of God's own rich and abundant storehouse. One of the most memorable Conventions in which he took part was that of 1905, when all hearts were warmed and subdued by the mighty happenings in Wales, and when the spirit of prayer and expectancy laid its hold upon the assembled crowds. At the Wednesday evening meeting in the Skiddaw-street Tent Dr. Pierson spoke on "The Inbreathed Spirit," and in the impressive hush which settled upon the gathering

it was felt that the Spirit who formed the subject of the address was Himself in the midst of the waiting people and was doing His convicting work.

Very touching and wonderfully powerful in its effect was the incident from his own experience which fell from the speaker's lips. He said: "I remember, as I stand here—it is twenty-seven years ago,—that once, in Michigan, I and my three children were in the water over half an hour, in instant peril of drowning. One of those children with me in the water was the beloved one who fell asleep in India a year ago last November. She was a little child; and when she came out of the water, and went home to her dear mother, who knew nothing about the peril until it was all over, she took pen and paper and, with trembling hand, wrote: 'God having saved me to-day from drowning, I give myself henceforth to Him.' When, in India, she had almost died two days before she actually departed, a companion said to her: 'Louise, you almost left us yesterday. If God had called you would you have been glad?' 'Oh! wouldn't I,' she replied. The Spirit had awakened such desires after God, that, when He called, she leaped like a tired child into her Father's arms. The thought of her, and of that escape from imminent drowning twenty-seven years ago, almost overpowers me as I stand here. I cannot but feel that, as to you, my friends, I have risen from the dead. I have been spared twenty-seven years to make this address in Keswick to-night. I might have died then."

Such a testimony, as can readily be understood, had a melting effect upon the audience, and interrupting the address, the whole gathering broke into the singing of "Songs of praises I will ever give to Thee."

When this meeting ended, the spirit of prayer seemed to fall upon a large section of the audience, and many resolved to wait behind for an all-night prayer-meeting.

What happened at that remarkable season of waiting upon God was described the following evening by Dr. Pierson, who had been in control of the proceedings and had been deeply impressed by the whole character of the gathering. "Those present last night at the meeting, which lasted up to three o'clock in the morning, will have seen a Welsh evangelistic and prayer-meeting reproduced in Keswick," he remarked. "Those who were there will not need me to expatiate much upon the subject. It was the finest illustration of what I have seen in Keswick of the way of the Holy Ghost answering prayer to remove obstacles. When we proposed to meet in the tent for prayer it was obvious, within five minutes, that there was some disturbing element, of the nature of which we scarcely knew.

"Remarks were made, not charitable remarks, but accusative in their character, and violent, and sounded a little like the tone of anarchy, and they caused some distress and some dissatisfaction among those who were jealous that there should be harmony, and love, and concord. But there were a few godly men who gave themselves to prayer that God would graciously over-rule what we felt was a Satanic disturbance. After a while, being present myself, I felt a deep impulse that the Spirit would have me speak to that congregation. I ascended the platform, and said to them, when we were all feeling a desire to have an all-night meeting: 'There are a great many people in this vicinity, lodging in these houses. Some are partially invalided and weak in their nervous system, some aged; they all need sleep, and any boisterous exhibitions on our part will disturb them. If you are content to stay here till three o'clock in the morning, I will stay with you; only, let us not look on our own things, but on the things of others. If you will accord to that will you raise your hands?' Every hand went

up, and from that time forward the devil was defeated and the Holy Ghost reigned in that assembly, and the obvious conditions of the *before* and *after* were as absolutely plain to my mind as the difference between midnight and dawn.

“What took place in that assembly?” he continued. “It was one of the most remarkable meetings I have ever seen in Keswick. In the first place, there were 368 written requests for prayer sent up for a definite purpose to the platform, and, I think, almost every one of those papers had from two to three requests upon it, so that we had upwards of a thousand requests for prayer, occupying one-and-a-half hours of time. Confessions of sin followed—all sorts, from all quarters, the tent meanwhile filling up respectably, with about seven or eight hundred people. Then came a marvellous experience, such as I have never seen before. I suggested that those who were ready, without any dependence upon feeling, to take God as a matter of faith, simply depending upon His promise, and standing upon His promise, should rise. One rose, and another, and yet another, till, to our amazement in the course of ten minutes, every man and woman in the tent was on his or her feet to take Almighty God as a God of fidelity, and claim His promise simply on the ground of faith.

“The hush of God came on all the assembly. In the midst of the assembly a man had come in who was in a state of drink. He found Christ in the meeting, went out of the meeting, brought in his wife with a nursing babe and her sister. They laboured with those two women to bring them to the knowledge of Christ. One man that was prayed for is a minister of a church in England, and when the statement was read he got up and said: ‘You may change to praise, for I am here and have got blessing!’ And so, when it came to be twenty-

five minutes to three, it was suggested that then it would be a good time to acknowledge in praise what God had done for us ; and just as we had had a marvellous witness of people rising to claim the power of God by faith, we had now another exhibition of people rising to testify in praise to God for blessing then and there received.

"Among others, a man who believed that he had committed the 'unpardonable' sin rose and told how his great burden had been rolled away on God. Thus, at that meeting we had a striking exhibition of how when everything is brought into accord with the Spirit, and all into harmony with each other in a Christian assembly, God at once begins marvellously to work for His own glory."

Nor were these the only memorable incidents in this remarkable Convention. At the closing meeting in Skiddaw Street Tent on Friday night, the Rev. E. W. Moore delivered a searching address on "The Ordeal by Fire," and instead of following with the message he had prepared, Dr. Pierson gave his testimony instead, "his heart and voice," as Mr. Head has said, "made tender by the spiritual enduement of the moment and the Pentecostal power which pervaded that gathering." Others followed him in testimony, "evidencing that spirit of brokenness of heart and contrition of spirit which lead to humble confessions of sin to God, and, in many cases, of harboured wrong to fellow man."

Writing on board the steamship which took him to America a day or two after the Convention closed, and with all the impressions of that wonderful night of confession still fresh upon him, Dr. Pierson vividly described the never-to-be-forgotten events and scenes. "While Rev. E. W. Moore," he said, "was giving his address, from I Cor. iii. 11-15, on the Ordeal of Fire—dwelling with searching power on the necessity, not only of

building on the right foundation, but with *purified materials*; and picturing the careless builder, fleeing from his burning house, losing all work and reward, and himself saved only as one who has barely escaped the flame—I felt God's refining fire going through me, revealing the wood, hay, and stubble, of work and motive. When I rose to speak, so humbling and overwhelming was this conviction, that, when called upon to 'lead in prayer and address' the meeting, it was quite involuntary that I should first of all make my confession. I did so, and asked others, who, like me, had felt conscious of God's direct dealing, to stand with me before God, as those who then and there besought Him to refine us *now*, that worthless material might not accumulate against the Coming Day of Fire. The invitation was so responded to that the *whole tent full of people* rose as one man! And while prayer was being offered, many voices joined in audible Amens. Not one word of the proposed address, carefully prepared for this closing meeting, was ever delivered. Even the *subject* was never indicated. It had been my intention to speak on 'Praying for the Holy Ghost.' As Prebendary Webb-Peploe well says, 'God had no need for the address, as He proposed giving an illustration of the theme instead.'

"The prayer was no sooner concluded than a spirit of penitent confession was already so manifest that it could not be restrained, and broke out in every quarter; and I stood there on my feet for about two hours and a-half witnessing the Holy Spirit's wondrous working. Scarcely any human guidance was needed. Christ was in the chair. A soldier confessed to desertion and theft, and left the tent to write out his confession; and some of us, later on, saw the letters he had written. A commander in the Navy grandly declared his purpose to make his ship a floating Bethel. Not less than fifty clergymen,

evangelists, and leaders in Christian work, confessed to sin of avarice, ambition, appetite, lust of applause, neglect of the Word, of prayer, of souls ; hundreds of other individual confessions of various sins of omission and commission followed, sometimes a half-dozen or more being on their feet at once."

Dr. Pierson's last visit to Keswick was two years ago—in 1909. On that occasion his friends were grieved to see the change that had come over him ; he was much more feeble, and, while his spirit was as keen and enthusiastic as ever, it was obvious that his physical strength did not correspond with his mental alertness. He himself confessed that he was there against the advice of his doctor. One feared to give expression to the feeling that never again would the voice of the great preacher thrill the Convention multitudes, and yet all who heard him seemed to intuitively realise that he was delivering his valedictory addresses, and that the messages which he was then proclaiming were the last that would fall from his lips amid the beloved surroundings that knew him so well.

And this feeling seemed to be shared by Dr. Pierson himself. There was something infinitely pathetic in the personal remarks which he made at the close of his first address on " Foundation Truths in Holy Living"—something that seemed to indicate that the long fellowship was about to be broken, and that they must not part with the least shadow of misunderstanding between them. Speaking with manifest emotion, he said that before coming to the meeting that morning, that he might get right with God, he had made confession to God of a sin against Him which he would not mention to his audience, as it was quite sufficient that he had mentioned it with deep penitence to Him. But it had occurred to him that he had been guilty of a sin to his brethren. "In my

zeal," he said, "to be true and genuine and sincere I have long neglected the cultivation of winning and attractive manners, and, no doubt, have been a stumbling-block to many souls; and I make that confession here this morning. We are told to speak the truth in love. Some of us may be so zealous for the truth that we forget the love, or so zealous for the love that we forget the truth; and I want to say this morning that if anything in me has been repellent through undue frankness or brusqueness, I repent of it before God, and I acknowledge it with sorrow to you."

No one who listened to these words is ever likely to forget the effect which they produced, and when a minute later Dr. Pierson, having made his own confession, asked any to stand up if the Lord had shown them something in their life that must be rectified, Godward or manward, and to take an instant, visible, decisive step in the recognition of this fact, a large number rose to their feet and were commended to God in prayer by Mr. Hopkins.

Looking back upon this Convention one recalls with a subdued interest some of its happenings. The whole atmosphere of the place seemed suffused with the spirit of love in a degree even more pronounced than usual. Dr. Pierson's own words, too, had in them almost a note of farewell; it seemed as if the thought of death were back of every word that he uttered, and he spoke with that intense earnestness which suggested the last word of a dying man to dying men. As a matter of fact, the very last address that he delivered had in it a reference to death. He was dealing, on the Friday, with the last of his "Foundation Truths in Holy Living," "Love" being the particular theme specially emphasised in his discourse. In burning phrase, and with a wooing tone that seemed irresistible in its power, he pleaded with his hearers for a complete surrender to the will of God. "If God wants

you to go, say, to China," he remarked, "China is the nearest place on earth to Heaven for you. To do the will of God is the greatest possible delight, and wherever He sends you He will go with you, and whatever He gives you to do, He will give you His own Divine strength with which to do it, and in the exile and loneliness you will have the sweetest experience of God's presence that you ever had."

"Compensations do not wait for hereafter, blessed be God, they come even here," he went on to add. "I never take a step for God that I do not get my recompense even here, and the greater the self-denial involved, the greater the Divine compensation, even in this life. I have not any sympathy with those who get up in prayer meetings and talk about their crosses. I think we ought to be talking about our crowns, and not producing the impression upon an unbelieving and impenitent world, that the Christian life is a life of wailing, a yoke intolerable and chafing. His yoke is easy and His burden is light. It is the obedience of love that makes it so easy."

Then he spoke of the fear of death. "A great many people," he said, "all their lifetime are subject to bondage, through fear of death, and whenever disease comes and knocks at the door they are in terror. I am not one of those who look on death as a wonderful blessing. Death is my enemy. I understand that. Death is the penalty of sin. I understand that. But, if the Lord tarries, and I fall before death, God can transform the avenging demon into an introducing angel, and He knows how to bring me to His presence even through the experience of dying. What are you afraid of? Won't God be with you in the valley of the shadow of death, and in death itself? You shall fear no evil when your life is full-grown; all these fears and fancies cannot abide where perfect love abides,"

These were among the last words he ever spoke from the Convention platform. As he passed with a friend from the tent to the house in which he was residing, his mind was full of the spirit of love in which the Convention had been bathed. "I have never seen anything like it in any place," he remarked. "The kindness of the Trustees is more than I can express. Here am I a Non-conformist, and most of the others clergy of the Established Church of England. Everything has been done not only for my comfort and happiness, but they have done all they could to put me in the forefront and give me every honour. I feel very grateful to them all."

And so passed his last Convention, from which he took his departure with the strains of "God be with you till we meet again" ringing in his ears—the parting prayer of friends who had sat at his feet to be taught in spiritual things, who loved him with a deep and tender love, and who intuitively felt that the parting was to be until they met "at Jesus' feet." Never again at Keswick will be heard that voice which so often spoke in the Master's name and with Divine power behind it. The empty place will not easily be filled, but while God carries off His workmen He continues His work. Keswick's message to the Church and the individual is as much needed to-day, and though some of the voices which have faithfully declared it in times gone by are now joining in the everlasting chorus around the Throne, others are called to proclaim the truths and to stand in the front of the movement.

The memory of what Dr. Pierson was enabled to do at Keswick and elsewhere will not readily pass, and many will thank God, here and through all eternity, for his faithful and effective ministry.

V

The Art of Illustration

MR. MOODY used to say that a sermon without illustrations resembled a house without windows, and that our American brethren in the ministry are in full agreement with this dictum, is obvious from the manner in which they draw upon incidents in history and in their own experience to emphasise and illuminate the leading points in their sermons.

Dr. Pierson was no exception to the rule. None knew better than he how to take hold of some historical fact, and with striking effect harness it to his argument. There is a feeling in some quarters that the free use of illustrations is a sign of intellectual weakness, and that it is but a poor substitute for well-reasoned argument. That may be true in some degree of that type of sermon which is only a series of stories loosely strung together without any real connecting link, but the illustration of a sermon or an address was with Dr. Pierson an art acquired only after long and patient practice. No one could employ illustrations as Dr. Pierson did unless he had read widely and studied deeply. It was not from one realm of knowledge only that he drew those striking incidents that glittered in his address like gems of rare and wondrous beauty; his studies carried him into many fields, and just

as the busy bee gathers honey from this flower and from that, as it flits about in the summer sunlight, so did he with unceasing industry draw into his rich storehouse the food that was to pass out again illumined by the alchemy of his own genius.

Coming much in contact with all classes of people, Dr. Pierson had many experiences, and he frequently referred to them in his public deliverances, but only, of course, in so far as they illustrated some point and were likely to be of help to others. Such an incident as the following was often used to add impressiveness to the appeal of Scripture:—

“I knew a young man who was an infidel. He told me in conversation that he did not sympathise with my belief in God, he did not even believe in a future state. He said, ‘When I die I am going to dust, and that will be the end of me.’ He had a Christian mother, who had long prayed for him. One day he came home from his office about noon and said, ‘Mother, I feel fatigued; I think I will lie down till supper is spread;’ so he laid down and fell asleep. At one o’clock she spoke to him and said, ‘We are ready to sit down at the table,’ but she could not wake him. She shook him violently, but she could not rouse him. He was in a comatose state, and there was no perceptible pulse, and he sank lower and lower until his breathing also was scarcely perceptible. They sent at once for a physician, who came in, examined his pulse, listened to his heart, made a thorough examination, but said, ‘I can do nothing for him; you will just be compelled to leave him as he is; he may come out of it, and he may not.’ He went away. About five o’clock in the afternoon, as they were sitting round him, simply watching the last rays of flickering life, he opened his eyes, he looked round, he saw his mother, he stretched out his hand and took her hand; and he said, ‘Mother,

what you taught me is all true; there is a future life. I have been treading along the verge of another world, and been looking over into that other world; mother, it is all true.' He shut his eyes and died. God allowed him to come back from the other world just long enough to assure that mother who had trained him in the true faith, that he saw at the last his error and abandoned his infidelity, and then he passed away."

In pressing home the invitation of the Gospel, Dr. Pierson brought into play all his vivid, passionate power of appeal. Like Mr. Spurgeon, when speaking to an audience in which unconverted persons formed a large proportion, he was always afraid that some one might go away without fully comprehending the import of the message which he was delivering, without understanding that the salvation offered was without money and without price, and that it could be obtained by simple faith. He felt that it was a glorious Gospel he had to preach, and lest its beauty should in any way be obscured he laboured with all his might to make the picture irresistible in its attractiveness, and to show Christ to others as He was to himself — the fairest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely. To support and emphasise his presentation of the Divine message, he selected his illustrations with scrupulous care, for while he knew that a great truth can be assisted in its mission by a timely and appropriate anecdote, he was also aware of the fact that its purpose may be hindered and defeated by a story without either point or application. Some of his finest illustrations are to be found in his Gospel utterances. The love of Jesus Christ was to him such a wonderful theme that he felt it demanded the very best of his gifts, and he laboured incessantly to make the Saviour so winsome that none could withstand the appeal of His love.

"There is something about the love of Jesus Christ

that forbids not only description, but imitation," Dr. Pierson has said. "We can only now and then reflect a single beam from this Sun of Righteousness when we catch the inspiration of its unselfishness. We have been accustomed to say that a mother's love can never be counterfeited, but how much more the Saviour's love!" And to illustrate the wonderful love of Jesus Christ he would relate this story:—"I remember during the late American War there was a young soldier that was wounded very seriously, and very nigh fatally. He was borne to the hospital, and rapidly became delirious; but before that he had given the attending surgeon the name and address of his parents. The surgeon, fearing that the worst was near at hand, sent a telegraphic message to his mother, who lived not a great way off. She took the next train and came immediately down to where her son lay in this delirious state. The surgeon met her at the door of the hospital, and he said, 'Madam, you must not go in. Your son is hanging between life and death; the least excitement, even the excitement of meeting you, might turn the scale and prove fatal. You must not go in;' and there that mother stood in the vestibule of the hospital and looked through the door at her son lying on the cot, and for two or three hours of mortal agony, such as a mother only could experience, she yearned to go and sit by his bedside. Finally, she could no longer endure it, and she beckoned to the surgeon, and said, 'Doctor, just let me go and take that nurse's place. I won't say a word to him; I won't let him know that I am his mother; I will not even call him by name or put a kiss upon his brow, but I must go and sit by him; I shall die if I stay here.' 'Well,' said the doctor, 'Madam, you may go if you will solemnly promise me that you will not let him know who you are.' She promised. She went in and took the nurse's place. The poor boy was lying with his

face towards the wall; by-and-by, in the fever of delirium, he turned round for a moment and groaned; and then as he turned back again towards the wall, she reached out her hand and laid it on the fevered brow. 'Why,' he said, 'nurse, that is *just like my mother's hand*.' If it is impossible to counterfeit a mother's love, who shall counterfeit a Saviour's! Everything about it, all the tenderness of His ministry,—the precious words He spoke to such women as the woman of Samaria at the well, to the woman who was a sinner, in the house of Simon the leper, when she washed His feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head,—all the marvellous majesty and mercy of that ministry defy competition, defy counterfeiting, almost defy imitation. And when Jesus speaks it is the Father's voice, it is the voice of God; when He touches us, it is the touch of God."

Here we have the art of illustration at its highest point. It is an axiom with preachers and evangelists that nothing so appeals to any gathering, particularly to an audience of men, so forcibly as an allusion to mothers and their love, for no matter how much the heart may be steeled against elevating influences it seldom resists the memory of mother and home; at the whisper of the sacred name of mother the door swings open, and all further resistance is for ever conquered.

Dr. Pierson knew this, and in the incident just quoted, as well as in many others like it, he applied a dynamic that shattered the walls of opposition and left the way clear for the comforting and the healing balm of the Gospel.

In the presentation of Christ's offer of mercy he was equally effective. The very simplicity of the way of salvation, paradoxical as it may seem, is to many a stumbling block, for they cannot realise that the Divine gift is to be obtained on such easy terms; they think that they must

do something to merit it, and thus they are led into all manner of vain attempts to win the favour of Christ in order to win His acceptance. Dr. Pierson was wont to say that "if you can put forth your hand to receive a gift, you are able to put forth your will and receive the gift of God, even Jesus Christ, as your Saviour." And with some such illustration as the following he would emphasise the simplicity of the transaction between God and man : "I heard an old lady who was starting on a railway journey from an American station, out of which many trains move, although in different directions. Not having travelled much on the rail cars, she got confused. The old lady I speak of was going up to Bay City, Michigan, and she was afraid that she was, perhaps, on the wrong train. She reached over, and showed her ticket to somebody in the seat immediately in front of her, and said, 'I want to go to Bay City. Is this the right train?' 'Yes, madam.' Still, she was not quite at ease, for she thought that perhaps this fellow-passenger might have got into the wrong train too; so she stepped across the aisle of the car, and showed her ticket to another person, and was again told, 'Yes, madam, this is the right train.' But still the old lady was a little uncertain. In a few moments in came the guard; and she saw on his cap the conductor's ribbon, and she beckoned to him, and said, 'I want to go to Bay City; is this the right train?' 'Yes, madam, this is the right train.' And now she settled back in her seat, and was asleep before the train moved.

"That illustrates the simplicity of taking God at his word. She did nothing but just receive the testimony of that conductor. That is all; but that is faith. The Lord Jesus Christ says to you, 'I love you; I died for you. Do you believe? Will you receive the salvation that I bought for you with My own blood?' You need

do no work; not even so much as to get up and turn round. You need not go and ask your fellow-man whether he has believed, and received, and been saved. All that you need to do is with all your heart to say, 'Dear Lord, I do take this salvation that Thou hast bought for me, and brought to me.' Simple, is it not? Yes, very simple: yet such receiving it is the soul of faith."

Nothing could exceed the simplicity of this method of explaining God's offer of salvation, and put so clearly it could not fail to reach hearts that were searching for the gift of gifts. In one of his last addresses at Keswick, Dr. Pierson admirably illustrated the manner of appropriating God's great gift by a reference to Baron Uxhill, of Russia, who, a little while before, had been travelling over the United States, gathering money to erect little chapels on his estate for his retainers. Baron Uxhill has put on record the testimony that when he was an infidel there came some commonplace, uneducated evangelists upon a neighbouring farm, and they wrought such wonderful results among the workmen that, although he cared nothing for Christ or the Christian faith, he said: "Come on my estate. Anything that will make drunken men sober, and indolent men industrious, and immoral men moral, and dishonest men honest, I want to have on my estate." They came, and a wonderful transformation took place, so that that infidel, that agnostic actually built a little chapel for them to speak to the retainers on his estate. They asked him if he would not come and open the chapel, and he said: "I do not take any stock of what you are saying and doing, but still I will come." He went; they gave him a Bible, and asked him if he would not read it. He took it home with him, and began to read it, just to see what it contained. By-and-by he came to 1 Pet. ii. 24: "He bare our sins in His own

body on the tree." He dropped on his knees, and lifted his heart to God, and said: "And *mine* also;" and those three little words brought the light of God into his soul.

Ever eager also to emphasise God's dealings in love and mercy with His children, Dr. Pierson employed many striking illustrations to illumine and beautify the constant care which our Father exercises on behalf of His own. For example:—"Moses, in Deuteronomy, compares the Lord's dealings with His people to the eagle stirring up her nest; fluttering over her young; spreading abroad her wings; taking and bearing them on her wings (Deut. xxxii. 11). How beautiful that figure is! The eagle builds her eyrie far up on the rocky heights, and when the wings of her young are beginning to grow, so that the facilities for flying are supplied them, as they are apt to be too self-indulgent and over-fond of the soft lining of a warm resting place, the mother eagle plants a thorn in the side of the nest, so that, as the little ones nestle down against the cushion of ease, they are pricked by the thorn, and so get up and begin to move around. And then, if necessary, she actually crowds them out of the nest, pushes them along towards the edge of the cliff, and sometimes even off the edge; so that, as they begin to fall, they are compelled to use their wings, fluttering and trying to sustain themselves in the air. When they tumble over and over, in unsuccessful efforts, the mother eagle, watching them, sweeps down beneath them, and spreads abroad her great wings that measure sometimes twelve feet from tip to tip, and as the little fledgling is falling to apparent destruction, she receives it upon her maternal pinions, and bears it back again to the eyrie. Does not the Lord sometimes allow His children to *fall*, because He would teach them how to *fly*? But the Lord keeps watch over His little fledgling, and, as His disciple tumbles over and over in helpless approach to destruction,

He sweeps down beneath, spreads abroad His great wings, and receives the penitent believer, and bears him back again to the height of conscious fellowship with God."

As has already been said, Dr. Pierson was an ardent soul-winner, everything else in life being subordinated to the one great passion of his life—the doing of God's will and the bringing of men and women to the Saviour's feet. His was, indeed, a beautiful example of the surrendered life. He did not, as some men are inclined to do, put himself upon an eminence, and from his self-chosen elevation, issue his instructions to those in the ranks. He asked none to tread a path along which his own feet had never travelled. His command was not, "Go"; it was an invitation—"Come." Impressed with what one man can accomplish under the impulse of a mighty passion for souls, he was always pleading with Christians to give God the reins of their life in order that He might use them as He wished, for he knew that the holding back of anything from God stems the flow of the blessing and restricts the area of usefulness.

As an illustration of how God can use and bless the life consecrated to His service, he frequently told the following:—"Years ago, the region about London Docks contained as large a heathen population as any district in Africa. Back of the huge warehouses were 'innumerable courts and alleys, filled with fog and dirt, and every horror of sight, sound and smell—a rendezvous for the lowest types of humanity.' The wealthy and influential class in this settlement were the rum-sellers and keepers of gambling-hells. Children were born, and grew to middle age on these precincts, who never heard the name of Christ, except in an oath. Thirty thousand souls were included in one parish here; but the clergyman never ventured out of the church to teach.

"A young man, named Charles Lowder, belonging to

an old English family, happened to pass through the district just after leaving Oxford. His classmates were going into politics, or the army, full of ambition and hope to make a name in the world; but Lowder heard 'a cry of mingled agony, suffering, laughter, and blasphemy coming from these depths that rang in his ears, go where he would.' He resolved to give up all other work in the world to help these people. He took a house in one of the lowest slums, and lived in it. 'It is only one of themselves that they will hear; not patronising visitors.' He preached every day in the streets, and for months was pelted with brickbats, shot at, and driven back with curses. He had, unfortunately, no eloquence with which to reach them; he was a slow, stammering speaker, but bold, patient, and in earnest. Year after year he lived among them. Even the worst ruffian learned to respect the tall, thin curate, whom he saw stopping the worst street fights, facing mobs, or nursing the victims of Asiatic cholera.

"Mr. Lowder lived in London Docks for twenty-three years. Night schools and industrial schools were opened, and refuges for drunkards, discharged prisoners, and fallen women. A large church was built, and several mission chapels. His chief assistants were the men and women whom he had rescued from 'the paths that abut on hell.' A visitor to the church said, 'The congregation differs from others in that they are all in such deadly earnest.'

"Mr. Lowder broke down under his work, and rapidly grew into an old careworn man. He died in a village in the Tyrol, whither he had gone for a month's rest. He was brought back to the Docks, where he had worked so long. Across the bridge, where he had once been chased by a mob bent on his murder, his body was reverently carried, while the police were obliged to keep back the crowd of sobbing people, who pressed forward to get a glimpse of 'Father Lowder,' as they called him. 'No

such a funeral,' said a London paper, 'has ever been seen in England.' The whole population of East London, turned out, stopping work for that day. The special trains run to Chislehurst were filled, and thousands followed on foot, miserable men and women whom he had lifted up from barbarism to life and hope."

Impressive as they are to read, one can easily understand how much more powerful such illustrations as those quoted were when backed by the personality of the living preacher, and when every word was uttered with the stirring appeal of that voice which for fifty years rang with the grandest message ever given to man to declare. Dr. Pierson chose his illustrations as a surgeon selects the instruments necessary for an operation; every arrow in his quiver had its own special work to do, and that they reached their appointed mark was proved again and again.

For every gift there is ample scope in the service of the King, and when it is laid upon the altar the Lord accepts and blesses it.

VI

Characteristics of a Great Life

“**A** HUMAN life, filled with the presence and power of God, is one of God’s choicest gifts to His Church and to the world.”

So wrote Dr. Pierson, as the introductory words to one of his biographies, and we may take his words and say that his own life, filled as it was with the presence and power of God, was indeed a choice gift to the Church and to the world. Endowed with natural abilities far above the ordinary, he consecrated them all to the service of God; laying them upon the altar, he gladly yielded them to his Divine Master, and was ever willing to spend and be spent in the cause to which his life was devoted. He considered it a rare honour to be used in the holy ministry. Others might talk of what they had sacrificed in the way of worldly possessions and positions in order to serve God in His Church, but the word “sacrifice” in such a relation as that had no place in his vocabulary; when he thought of the sufferings of his Lord he considered that none could ever do too much in the service of a Master who had given His life to bring rebel man to Himself.

Few men have been more earnest than Dr. Pierson in proclaiming the Good News of salvation. It was an earnestness that never seemed to be relaxed, an earnest-

ness that sometimes developed into a severity of manner and speech, and which, especially amongst those who did not know him personally, produced the impression that his nature was harsh and forbidding. "No doubt," says the Rev. J. B. Figgis, "his intellectual powers, his giant grasp of truth, his energy of expression, would have made him remarkable in any period of the Church's history; but the mellowing and soul-subduing power of sanctification, for which man has no credit, brought in traits of character of another and gentler order, and without these the other faculties must have been somewhat rigid, if not stern. It was very touching to hear him speak on a certain occasion of his consciousness of fault, and the desire for grace to amend it, but without the truth for which our Cumberland Convention stands, intellectual eminence might easily have been linked with intellectual arrogance. Under the teaching of the Tent, the strong man bowed himself, and we have found him many times manifesting the simplicity and humility of a little child.

"His nature was exceedingly sensitive," Mr. Figgis adds. "Before a service one dared not speak to him unless he spoke to you, and after a service, nine times out of ten, one was awed into silence, and so was he. This 'one thing' he did, and everything was sacrificed to the one thing. I shall never forget how men of the strongest nature I ever knew were broken down under his appeals, and sat in the vestry after the service with the tears streaming down their cheeks."

There were depths in Dr. Pierson's nature not understood by the ordinary individual. "Those who knew him only by his public ministry and by his writings saw but one side of his character," writes the Rev. J. Stuart Holden, "but to those of us who were privileged to enter into the inner life of his heart and home there were revealed in that intercourse virtues and characteristics

which set him far above ordinary men. To know him thus was to love him indeed, and rarely have I known one who like him opened and responded so readily to affection. Often austere and somewhat forbidding in manner when engaged in the high service of speaking and preaching, he was, however, in his personal friendships tender, sympathetic, and affectionate to an extraordinary degree. During many long journeys which I have taken in company with him by land and sea, and in the sharing of many common interests, both public and private, I have learned to know and love him as one in whom not only the gifts of the Spirit were conspicuous, but the graces also of the same Spirit were abundant."

To this may be added the testimony of Sir Robert Anderson, K.C.B., who writes to me:—"I have seldom known a more gracious man. An incident which lives in my memory will serve to exemplify this trait in his character. With profit and delight I attended the course of lectures he gave at Exeter Hall half-a-dozen years ago. Immediately at the close of his first lecture he turned to give me a hearty greeting. I told him how much his ministry helped me; and in response to a deprecatory remark, I repeated my words still more strongly. 'It was a rich pot of ointment you gave me to-night,' said I, 'and there was only one little fly in it.' 'And that was ——?' he asked. 'The way you named the Lord again and again,' I replied. 'Why do you not speak of Him as His disciples always did, and not like the vagabond Jews in Acts?' 'My bad training,' said he; 'I learned the habit in a theological college; keep reminding me of it.'

"The longer I thought over this incident, the more I felt rebuked by the grace with which he accepted my rebuke. We next met that night week at his second lecture; and the moment he pronounced the Benediction he turned again to greet me, and his first word was, as he

grasped my hand, ‘*Wasn’t I better to-night ?*’ Who could help loving such a man ! Life is lonelier, and the world is emptier, now that he is gone.”

While capable in private life of much light-hearted merriment, always enjoying fun with the relish of a school-boy, it was only on rare occasions that he permitted himself to indulge in anything approaching humour when addressing an audience in public. There are many, I know, who assert that humour is just as much a gift of God as the other graces attributed to that source, and that it may quite legitimately be employed in His service. I am not prepared to dispute the point ; I simply record the fact that Dr. Pierson was a man of another mould, that he purposely and determinedly set his face against everything suggestive of levity in the pulpit or on the platform, that he discouraged laughter in a sacred service, and that even applause was never welcome to him.

On one occasion, I am told by one who was present, he addressed, on a Sunday morning, the boys of the Stockwell Orphanage, giving them a lesson in natural history. He pointed out first the lion, ready at once to devour ; then the wolf, waiting his chance ; then the fox, crafty, not to be trusted ; the eagle ready to swoop down and devour the lamb after carrying it away. Then, after asking the boys whether they ever entertained such a feeling, he put the blunt question : “ Do you ever feel that you have a whole *menagerie* inside you ? ” Naturally, a titter of laughter went round the youthful audience, not altogether to the speaker’s liking, for he at once remarked that in all the years he had been trying to serve God he always avoided anything like laughter in His sacred house. What he always felt was this : that one could not be too careful in sowing the word, and that if people were tempted to laugh, the devil’s birds would swoop down and carry away the sacred seed.

A man's humility is often the standard of his greatness, and it was certainly so in Dr. Pierson's case. He was grateful beyond measure when he could be of help to any one, but such service was never made the ground of boasting, for he realised, as all right-minded men must realise, that being nothing in himself he could only be made a blessing to others through God. He deprecated praise for the same reason, though always in a pleasant spirit. When in Wales, some years ago, a minister who had read many of his books and come under the spell of his spiritual influence and charming style, journeyed some miles to hear him preach, and upon telling Dr. Pierson this at a subsequent interview, he good-humouredly remarked, "I am afraid the hare is not worth the hunt."

As has already been noted, Dr. Pierson was intimately associated with that wonderful man of prayer, George Müller, and according to one of the doctor's friends, he had much of the same childlike faith and simplicity of character as the great founder of the Müller orphanages. An incident which comes to the recollection of this friend shows this childlike quality in Dr. Pierson to perfection. "I was," he says, "travelling in his company from New York some years ago. Dr. Pierson was greatly interested in the conversation on the train, with the result that when he dismounted at a station an irate passenger rushed after him, claiming a handbag which Dr. Pierson had taken absent-mindedly! We all chaffed him, but there was more to follow. When the next change of stations occurred Dr. Pierson stood on the platform continuing his conversation; but suddenly a lady darted up to him and snatched her umbrella from him! After these laughable incidents we threatened to report him to Exeter Hall."

This same simplicity was also marked in relation to money. Money in itself had no attraction for him. He told one of his friends that in the pastorate he filled before

going to Philadelphia he had an income of about £2,000 a year. One day he remarked to his wife, "These are not healthy surroundings in which to bring up our children," and being convinced of that he resigned his office, accepting another at £500 a year. Another of his friends tells me that Dr. Pierson agreed to spend three weeks or a month with him in Switzerland one summer, and he made arrangements accordingly, but appeals for help in Christian work led the Doctor to shorten his holiday to a week in the Lake District, and further applications reduced this holiday to a day's walking excursion, which was not interrupted. The same friend had a similar experience with Dr. Pierson in the United States, and he mentions these incidents to illustrate the fact that he always sought first the Kingdom of God, that the cause of God was ever pre-eminent, and that he did not hesitate to sacrifice his own enjoyment—and incidentally the enjoyment of his friends—to the Master's service.

Wonderfully susceptible to Divine influences, Dr. Pierson was never happier than when in an atmosphere warm with the Divine presence. At the Llandrindod Convention, in 1903, he was conscious of unusual power, and he then predicted that Wales was on the eve of a spiritual awakening, this being about fifteen months before the great Revival broke out.

In 1905 he visited several centres of the "fire zone," and a ministerial friend who accompanied him on that occasion says that wherever he went he added fuel to the flame.

Zealous as he was for the honour and the glory of God, and striving as he did to advance the Kingdom of his Lord, he was stirred to wrath by any and every effort to cast doubt on the Deity of Christ. Nothing could equal his scathing handling of those who belittled His Saviour. To see him stand upon a platform and to hear

him deal with the modern heresies that seek to strip Christ of His Deity was to have a vision of the ancient days when the prophets of God stood up to declare the Divine message. I have seen him when it seemed as if for a moment or two he was without words to express the sorrow and anger that filled his heart. But presently the words would come—come in such a torrent of righteous invective as to hush one into a solemn awe, for if ever he spoke in words of living fire it was when the trend of the time compelled him to champion the truths that were under attack and upon which the whole structure of Christianity is built.

In so happened that early in 1907, just when the “New Theology” was making its vain bid for public favour, Dr. Pierson was due to deliver at Exeter Hall—for many years the leading place for religious gatherings in London, but now no longer in existence—another of those series of Bible lectures which never failed to draw large and appreciative audiences. Confident that some reference would be made to the question of the moment, a gathering that completely filled the historic building assembled in eager expectancy. Nor were they disappointed. “Men with their watering pots may try to put out the stars, but the stars shine on in celestial derision,” said Dr. Pierson, in one of his opening sentences, as he proceeded to show the wonderful unity of the Bible, and to combat the theories of those who would tear from the Word of God its Divine character.

“I tell you,” he declared, speaking with eloquent and stirring passion, “it is a very solemn thing to be living in these times when the Church Missionary Society in India sends a protest and appeal to the whole Christian world to say that this Higher Criticism is undermining the faith of the converts in India, and undermining the power of the churches in India, and begging that this

demolition of Christian doctrine may cease—when one of your own greatest thinkers tells us that we are in a crisis to which there has been no parallel since the second century. I would to God that I had the brain of a Newton, the tongue of a Chrysostom, the heart of a Luther, and the martyr spirit of a Savonarola, I would like to go out and nail my theses to the doors of All Saints' Church and All Sinners' Synagogue, and wait, like Luther, for any proper refutation to the theses that set forth the fact that this book is a mirror of God and a mirror of man. And before this great Exeter Hall is demolished, or passes into other hands for possible secular uses, I would to God there might be one more Œcumenical Council called in this hall, that from all over the world the scarred veterans of modern conflict might come, as the scarred veterans of the original persecutions came to the Council of Nice in 325, when the Emperor Constantine presided, and when the great doctrine of the Deity of Christ was defined. I would to God we might have one more Œcumenical Conference in this great Exeter Hall, and let us with unanimous voice show the modern Church and the unbelieving world that there are thousands and tens of thousands of believers that still believe in the inspiration of this Book and the Divinity of Christ, and who accept without hesitation the miraculous birth of Christ, the miraculous resurrection of Christ, and the all-sufficiency of His atoning blood. Let us rise to the greatness of the occasion and mightily unite for the imperilled truths of the only faith that has ever brought consolation to man in this life of preparation for the life to come."

A week or two after making this declaration, Dr. Pierson spoke at the two great meetings held in the Cannon Street Hotel to protest against the "New Theology" and the Higher Criticism. There again he

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rose to the occasion, never for a moment resorting to personalities, but handling the whole question in its effect both upon the Church of Christ and the unconverted world.

Of a peculiarly sensitive nature, Dr. Pierson was most appreciative of any kindness or attention shown to him or his. As an illustration of this trait in his character I may quote the words of a minister who writes me as follows: "Once after ministering for some months at Christ Church, Westminster Bridge Road, he came direct to Chester to preach for us. He and his had been loaded with presents, and evidently touched by the appreciation of his services. He seemed as proud of the gifts as a bride of her wedding present, and was as sensitive to the love and the goodwill behind them. Here is a specimen letter bearing out what is said of the great man's sweet appreciativeness of every little attention: 'My Dear Brother, My daughters have just arrived, and are full of enthusiasm over your most loving and considerate care of them and thoughtfulness for their comfort. All this we appreciate as truly as they. May I only say that if at any time before my return I can do you any service, you have only to say so and command me. My memories of your kind personal attentions to me are now enriched by similar consideration to my bairns, whom I charged to find you out in Chester.—Faithfully Yours, with much regard for the dear wife, Arthur T. Pierson.' "

To Dr. Pierson the home was, indeed, a sanctuary, and there he loved and was loved in return in a manner beautiful to behold. He had the joy of seeing all his children come to the Lord and engage in His work. He held, and held strongly, that to Christian parents is given the privilege of leading their children to the Saviour's feet, and he was altogether without sympathy with the modern practice of sending boys and girls from home at

an early age. On this subject he spoke with much emphasis at the Mildmay Conference in 1907. Such a practice he denounced as pernicious, vicious, and destructive. "I feel tremendously in earnest about it," he said. "I have seen over and over again young children of fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, and eighteen come home from schools and universities having cut loose from everything that their father and mother believed before them. All this they learned in boarding schools, and in colleges and universities, where oftentimes sceptical teachers are put in charge of the children." And then he added this personal touch to his address: "One of the foremost officers of one of my churches sent his boy to the university in the same year that I sent my daughter—who is now in Japan and has been there for seventeen years as a missionary—to the best Christian school that I knew. This man sent his boy to a university where he knew that one of the professors proclaimed atheism in his classes. His boy came back virtually an atheist, and my daughter came back consecrated to missions."

In his home, as everywhere else, Dr. Pierson put God first and sought to honour Him in all that He did.

That is the memory and the example he has left to us—a memory and an example well worth treasuring and emulating.

Dr. Pierson: His Message

Selected from unpublished
material representative of a
Fifty Years' Faithful and
Fruitful Ministry

I

The Gospel in Miniature

“If any man thirst let him come unto Me and drink.”—
John vii. 37.

THIS is the gospel in one sentence. We might almost say that if the entire gospel according to John, and even the companion gospel narratives of Matthew and Mark and Luke, should, in some mysterious way, disappear from among the children of men and this one sentence should remain, it might serve to guide penitent and believing souls unto salvation. “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink.” Luther said that there were scattered all through the Bible little gospels. He referred to such sentences as that in Habakkuk: “The just shall live by his faith,” and to such as that in John iii., 16: “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but should have everlasting life”; and to that other little gospel in Titus: “The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.”

If there be many little gospels within the compass of the Word of God, this is one of the most precious and the most significant of them all. It reminds us of the works of God which, the more you examine them, the more perfect they appear. If you take the works of

man the more you examine them the more you discover imperfection; but if you put the works of God under the highest magnifying power of the microscope, the more closely you look at them the more absolutely perfect they appear to be. And so the more closely you look at the words of God the more you will see evidence that they could only have been spoken by those who were taught of the Spirit of God.

Suppose we take this verse, which might be called the gospel in miniature: "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." The three leading words of this text are "thirst," "come," "drink." See the order of them and see how complete they make the gospel message when they are presented in this order. "Thirst" is a word that has to do with appetite or longing. "Come" is a word that has to do with approaching. "Drink" is a word that represents appropriating or making one's own. So we have here in this little gospel—this gospel in a sentence—the three conditions of salvation: first, an appetite or longing after Jesus; secondly, an approach or voluntary coming to Christ; and, third, appropriation, the acceptance or claiming as my own of what Christ represents. So I think that this is a very simple and very beautiful passage, in which the whole gospel is declared.

"If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." We read here that these words were spoken on the last great day of the Feast of Tabernacles. You remember in connection with the Feast of Tabernacles there was a ceremony observed on the morning of each day. When the victim was laid on the altar at the time of morning sacrifice, the priests went down through the gate in the wall to the Pool of Siloam, and there dipped their golden vessels in the water and brought it up and poured it over the sacrifice, and then that 3rd verse of the 12th chapter

of Isaiah was chanted, "With joy shall ye draw water from the wells of salvation." This ceremony was intended to bring to the minds of the children of God their journey in the desert, when they were thirsty and their soul failed them for the agony of their desire for water, and when in the dry desert sands, with the hot sun blistering their feet, and causing the blood to flow like fever through their veins, they cried unto God and unto Moses, the representative of God, and God, seeing the distress of His people, told Moses what to do, and out of the rock which Moses smote there came a stream of water, and they filled their vessels and satisfied their thirst; and, what is still more remarkable, that flow from the rock was not a flow that stopped when the immediate wants of the people were met, but it made a river that flowed along the same course that they were pursuing. Paul refers to this when he says "that rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ." The rock poured forth this stream, and the stream flowed along the desert sand in the same direction that the people were traveling, so that as they wandered along through these wilderness paths the water followed them and supplied their daily need. Now such a great event as this, an event so stupendous, must have a memorial in the Feast of Tabernacles, when they all abode in tents to keep themselves in memory of how the Lord guided them through the forty years in the wilderness; and every morning this ceremony was repeated. Now when the last great day of the feast came, and these ceremonies were about to close for a year, Christ came and stood, undoubtedly near to the altar, and cried aloud so that the whole multitude could hear Him, "If any man thirst let him come unto Me and drink." "If any of you are thirsty," He said, "I am the rock, and out of Me flows the living water to satisfy all your wants."

I.

Now take that word "thirst." Everybody understands it. There are two appetites that are especially strong and especially depressing when they are dissatisfied or unsatisfied. One is hunger and the other is thirst. Whether hunger or thirst causes the greater agony I suppose no one can tell, but each of them represents a hunger so exquisite that no human language will describe it. Yet I suppose that if there is in either case a greater distress than in the other, it is in the case of thirst. A story is told of a king of Thrace who, on one occasion, when he was travelling with the agony of such intense thirst that he could not longer endure, bartered his entire kingdom for a draught of water. He sacrificed the empire over which he reigned for the temporary satisfaction of quenching his thirst.

"If any man thirst." That word "thirst" can mean nothing else than a need, and a conscious need. The first thing that is of necessity in the case of the sinner coming to Christ is to feel his need of Jesus. To make men feel this need is the hardest thing that a minister of Christ has to do. I think that it may be reverently said to be the first work and the most difficult work that the Spirit of God has to perform in leading sinners to Christ—to awaken a conscious need. There is a conscious need already that does not need to be awakened, but to awaken a conscious need of Christ, to show a sinner that the need of which he is conscious can be met and supplied in no other way than by Jesus—ah! that is the master accomplishment of the Spirit of God. Socrates used to say that his work in the city of Athens was to bring men from ignorance unconscious to ignorance conscious, or, to put the matter in his own language as nearly as possible, he said of other men in Athens,

“They know nothing and do not know it. I know nothing and do know it, and my work is to show men that they do not know anything”—to lead on to the knowledge of their own lack of knowledge. The Holy Spirit is the Socrates of the world, in this respect, that His peculiar office is to bring men from their ignorance unconscious to their ignorance conscious, to show men that they are needy, and that they are needy with regard to Jesus.

The word “thirst” here is also to be noticed specially because it represents a natural need and not an artificial need. There are a great many of our needs that are not natural. Sometimes we cultivate a habit for certain things which at first disgusted us. We have no relish for them. A great many of what we call our cravings are cravings for which we have ourselves to be responsible. We begin by disliking a thing which afterwards we crave. I suppose that the appetite for strong drink is not a natural habit. There may be some children born of drunkards that come into this world with a kind of natural longing for drink; but these are exceptions. A healthy child has a distaste for strong drink. A healthy child has a distaste for tobacco or opium, and if there be an appetite for any of these things it must be an appetite which has been cultivated. It is not natural to us. But thirst is a natural appetite—an appetite that comes with our being. It is one of the conditions of our being that we shall thirst, and there is only one thing that can satisfy thirst, and that is water. And so this thirst represents a universal as well as a conscious need and a natural need.

It is a need of all men. There never was a man or a woman or a child that lived on earth and knew nothing of the craving of thirst; and there is not any necessity for an argument to prove that only one thing will meet

that peculiar longing, and it is that which, by God, was designed and fitted to meet that need. So with regard to Jesus Christ. The first condition of salvation is that you shall recognise your need of Christ and His fitness to supply your need.

II.

Now if your thirst is awakened, if your conscious need troubles you, and if you recognise in that need a want which only Jesus Christ can supply, then the next step is to come unto Him. Everybody knows what the word "come" means, as everybody knows what the word "thirst" means. "Come" is the simplest word in our Saxon language to express our approach to an object or to a person. "If any man has the conscious need and the felt want, then let that man come to Me." The will is exercised in the coming. How do you come? You take a step, another step, and still another, until the distance is shortened between you and the object or the person that you seek, and until the distance has finally passed away. How do you come to Christ? You take a step in the direction of Christ. And how do you take a step? Every step is the effect of a will. You may not be conscious at the time that you are making a will, or a choice, or a decision, but you cannot take a step without an act of the will. A man that is paralysed finds out how much the will has to do with the steps, for although now he wills to step he cannot step, because the muscles and the nerves cannot obey the will, and he comes, perhaps for the first time, to realise what a mighty power the will is when the muscles and the nerves and the tendons are obedient to the voice of the will.

Now how do you come to Christ? By willing to approach Him, by taking a step in the direction in which Jesus Christ appears to you through the gospel and by

the Holy Spirit; not that you actually take a step in the direction of Jesus Christ, as you will all understand, but that you exercise your will in obedience to what the gospel demands, and the call which Jesus Christ sounds in your ear; that you do in your mind and in your heart and in your will what you would do with your feet if Jesus Christ were standing near you and were saying, "Come unto Me."

Now notice that it is unto Christ that you are bidden to come. He does not say "Come to the church" or "the chapel." He does not say, "Come to the Word of God" even, important as that is. He does not say, "Come to the prayer meeting" or "to the baptismal font," or "Come to the Lord's table"—none of these things. He says, "Come unto Me." He does not say "Come to a priest" or "to a minister," or "to a fellow-man," or "to the best of men," but "Come unto Me." The Church may be the way to Christ, provided it exalts Jesus. The Word may be the way to Christ provided you search it to find Jesus Christ. The baptismal font and the Lord's table and the prayer meeting may be means by which Christ comes into closer relationship and fellowship with you, but if through all these things you do not find Jesus, it is a failure. Suppose that I were trying to show you Jupiter and his moons, and here is a telescope set up, the object glass being turned toward Jupiter and the eye-piece toward you. Now I say, "Come and look through this eye-piece of the telescope and you shall see Jupiter with his moons revolving round him"; and you come and stand and look at the telescope. You admire the structure of the eye-piece and the beauty of the whole piece of mechanism. You speak of the brightness of the polished brass and the elegance of the wheels and all the apparatus by which the telescope is turned in this or that direction; and

especially do you admire the delicacy by which it is hung so that an infant's hand might suffice to turn the monster instrument around. But you never would see Jupiter and his moons by looking at the telescope. It is through the telescope that you must look if you want to see the stars. And if you come and look at the Church and her sacraments and her ordinances, if you take up the precious Word of God and look at that, if you look at a minister of Jesus Christ or at the whole body of believing disciples, it may all be well, provided that through them you see Jesus; but if your eye rests on them and goes no farther, they are a snare to you and not a help.

I have had young men come to me and ask what they shall do to be saved, and I have tried to show them the way of salvation, and I have said, "Well, how do you feel about yourself?" One young man once said to me, "I think I am getting to be a saved man." "How is that?" "Why, I have been baptised, and I have gone to the Lord's Table, and I have been confirmed in an Episcopal church, and I think if I keep on this way, by and by I will get to be saved." "Well," I said, "my dear sir, I am afraid you are in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity. I am afraid that you have not yet found out what salvation is. Salvation is not baptism, it is not the Lord's Supper, it is not joining a church, it is not reading your Bible, it is not praying to God." What is it? It is accepting Jesus Christ as my Saviour and Lord; and when I have done that, all these other acts become means of grace and helps to holy living; but if my eye rests on these things and goes no farther, they become like a golden veil that hides prospects, heavenly and divine, from my eyes.

So I would repeat, do not look *at* the telescope, but look *through* it. The Church is an exquisitely constructed instrument, but it is an instrument to bring

heaven nearer and Christ nearer. If you do not look through it at the Christ and get to Him, the Church is, as far as you are concerned, a failure. "Come unto Me"—not unto a creed. He is not going to save you because you repeat the Apostles' creed, or because you learn the Westminster Confession, or the Confession of the Synod of Dort, or the Thirty-nine Articles. Salvation does not come by a creed. It comes by the Christ, and the creed is only to help you to appreciate what the Word of God teaches about the Christ, and so conduct your weary feet to the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

If you have felt your conscious need and that has been turned into a conscious want, and you know that Christ only can fill it as the water only can quench thirst, and if you have sought to take a step towards Jesus according to the way which is indicated in the Word of God; if you have begun by sorrowing for your sin, which is the first step, and then, having sorrowed for your sin, put it away, which is the second step; and then if, having put your sin away, you have trusted in Jesus for His atoning grace and for His all-sufficient love, which is the third step, then you want to confess Him and follow Him in a holy obedience, and fulfil all righteousness, and so, step by step, get nearer and nearer to Him, and the life He represents and would have *you* exemplify and represent.

III.

There is a third word to which I have made almost no reference, and that is "drink." It is perfectly obvious to us that if a river of water flowed through the very midst of a city and there were thirsty people dying of thirst in every direction, that river, with all its flood of waters, would not do good to anybody who did not drink of it. Provision provides, but it does not feed. Provi-

sion supplies, but it does not satisfy. There must be something besides the provision and the readiness and the abundance. There must be the appropriation, the making mine. It is a wonderful fact about the constitution of our bodies that the moment we take food into the stomach—nay, the moment we take it into the mouth and begin to chew it, we begin to make that food our own. It passes through a strange process that we call mastication, by which certain fluids that are in the mouth and in the glands beneath the tongue and on each side of the throat are poured into the mouth and mixed with the food; and then when it goes into the stomach, juices supplied by the stomach, liver, etc., helped by the other processes of digestion, serve to make that food, as we say, digest.

Now, what is digestion? Digestion is taking out of food material for blood and bone and brain and sinew and muscle; that is to say, it is taking dead matter and turning it into living matter. It is taking a dead particle of flesh or fowl or fish or bread, or whatever it may be, and turning that dead particle into a living atom in the blood, or in the brain, or in the muscle. So you see that we make our own the food which we eat, if we properly digest it, and it becomes part and parcel of us. Oh, is not this beautiful? "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." If you drink, you make Christ yours. He who was outside of you before, now becomes part and parcel of your life, like the bread you eat, like the water you drink, like the air you breathe. That which was dead to you before as being foreign to you, and outside of you, becomes life and strength and vigour and joy to you, because you take it into yourself and make it your own. You say to Him who was simply God outside of you, "My God." You say to what was a refuge outside of you, "My refuge." You

say to a fortress that was a stronghold that you looked at, "*My stronghold.*" Now, when does a man make a stronghold his own? When He goes inside of it. It is then his refuge, his stronghold, his high tower, because though he was formerly outside, he is now inside and he claims for it the refuge and protection which that stronghold or fortress supplies.

Oh, how simple and how plain this is. "If any man thirst." There is conscious need and conscious want. "Let him come." There is conscious voluntary approach. "Let him come unto Me"—a person: not a creed, nor a church, nor an ordinance, nor a sacrament, nor even the inspired Word of God, but the person of Jesus Christ. "And drink"; that is, take and make your own. When Christ instituted the Last Supper, when He put before the disciples the bread and the cup, He said, "Take, eat. Take, drink." The bread was there, but it did not become part and parcel of them till they took it and ate it. The cup was there, but it did not become part and parcel of them till they took it and drank it. Christ is there. Now understand. You may feel your need, and you may be conscious of your want, and you may take a step toward Christ, but if you do not take Christ, if you do not appropriate Christ as much as you appropriate the water that you drink, or the bread that you eat, He will never be a Saviour to you. He can never be a Saviour to you as long as He is looked upon as somebody outside of you. He must become in you the life of God and God Himself dwelling in you; and then He will give strength to your spiritual nerve; and He will become a flow of power to your blood; He will become strength to your spiritual muscle, and He will become the force of your spiritual brain. Your whole spiritual life will be nourished and cherished by Jesus living in you.

I want, in conclusion, just to indicate two or three other facts bearing on this subject.

In the first place, I want you to notice that while we often say, with a great amount of truth, that the invitations of the gospel are universal, in a sense they are not universal. "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden." That is an invitation limited to the weary and the heavy laden. "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." There is an invitation limited to those that are thirsty. Jesus Christ does not invite everybody. He invites people that need Him and want Him and feel their need and feel their want, because to all others the invitation might as well be pronounced when the ear was deaf. You might as well try to illustrate to a deaf man the magnificent anthems and the instrumental music of a great orchestra as to make a sinner come to Jesus who had no conscious need, no conscious want. It is those that are weary that He calls, and the more weary the more desirous He is to offer rest. It is those that are thirsty that Christ saves; and the intenser the thirst the more ready He is to pour the river of living water into the heart and into the life. So the invitation of the gospel is limited, but, blessed be God, it includes all those who feel their need of Jesus Christ, for,

All the fitness He requireth

Is to feel your need of Him.

Then another fact that I want to emphasise is that faith is a courageous principle of life. There is a daring about faith, a sort of desperate daring. When the Jews were liable, all of them, to be destroyed, and Mordecai said to Esther, "Perhaps thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this," Esther felt the awful extremity, and although she had not been called to come into the king for days and weeks, she said, "I will go in unto

the king, and if I perish, I perish." And that wonderful historical incident is found illustrated in the beautiful hymn :—

I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try;
For if I stay away I know
I must for ever die.

There is a great deal of false humility. "Oh," people say, "I do need Jesus, and I feel my need and I would come to Jesus, but I am so unworthy." Well, I would like to know whom Jesus came to save but the unworthy. He says, "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." Now, men cannot be any worse than lost, and if they are lost and feel themselves lost, they are the very souls that, according to His own conditions, invitation, and promise, He came to save. "I came," He said, "not to call the righteous. The righteous do not need to be called. I came to call sinners to repentance." If you will read the seventh chapter of Luke you will see how the woman that anointed Christ's feet and wiped them with the hair of her head was all the more welcomed by the Lord because she had great sins to be forgiven, and she loved in proportion to the sins that were forgiven. And if you will read the story of the prodigal in the 15th of Luke, you will find that it was when the prodigal, who had gone into the far country, had wasted all his substance and had not anything left, had worn his clothes into rags and had not a decent garment, had been distressed by famine and sold himself to a citizen of the country, and had gone into the fields to feed swine, which the Jews accounted an abhorrent occupation, and could not even get the husks upon which the swine had been accustomed to feed, and nobody gave anything to him to keep life in his body—it was *then* that he rose and went to his

father. Did his father reproach him for coming home when he had no alternative? Did his father reproach him with his rags, with his unkempt person, with his deep poverty and misery, with his penniless condition? No, his father received him with open arms, a kiss, a robe, a ring, shoes, and a fattened calf.

And so I say, there is a certain daring about faith, a desperate daring. You can do nothing for yourself; your fellow-man can do nothing for you; and the law gives you no help. There is a broken cistern that can hold no water in whatever way you turn. But here is the fount of living waters. Your thirst is very great, is it? Then that fount is all the more for you. Your disease is such that no physician can heal it, is it? Then the great Physician, with the balm of Gilead, is all the more for you. You are absolutely lost and cannot find your way, are you? Then the light of the world is all the more for you. You are so hungry that you are in a deadly hunger? Then the bread of life is for you. You are so thirsty that nothing can express your agonies? Then the water of life is for you. Be courageous about it. Be daring about it. Be desperate enough. Pass by all pretended human merit and come away from everything that pretends to give you aid, to Him who is the only pole star of the soul. Remember that not your merit but your misery was the magnet that drew Jesus down from the skies, as Thomas Guthrie used to say. Remember that the fact that you are a lost man and that nobody can save you but Christ is the one thing that attracts Jesus to come and be your Saviour.

II

Vicarious Dying

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.”—1 *Peter* iii. 18.

THERE are some great first truths which lie at the bottom of every science and every department of human learning, just as foundation stones lie at the bottom of a structure, just as pillars sustain an arch, and you can never master a subject until these first principles are thoroughly understood. The importance of a few great primary facts and primary truths in the formation of character, and in the determination of destiny, cannot possibly be overstated. The fact is that the great mass of human beings can only take in primary truths. The simplest facts are all that are apprehended by the great bulk of people, and the simplest truths are all that the average human mind is able to grasp; and even the greatest, the wisest, the most learned, after they have gone through with their speculations, after they have wandered round the whole course of wide and varied studies, come back to the first great principles as something on which to rest. All else may be uncertain and insecure, like shifting sand. Men to-day form an opinion which they abandon to-morrow. They propose a conjecture to-day, a theory to-day, which proves to be unworthy of confidence to-morrow. Systems of philosophy have arisen in the world, and they have fallen into ruin. Sciences have projected what they have

supposed to be ascertained truths, and they have proved to be ascertained errors. And so we all have to come back at last to the rock-basis of certain great primary truths that cannot be disputed or denied.

There are four words in the First Epistle of Peter that I think without hesitation we may say are the four most important words put together in the Bible: "He bare our sin." If you can find any other sentence of four words in the entire Bible that is more important to sinners and saints than those four words, you can do more than I can. The 53rd chapter of Isaiah is the central chapter in the greatest poem that man has ever written under the inspiration of the Spirit of God. There are 27 chapters in that prophecy that are occupied with Christ, from the 40th to the 66th, and among those 27 chapters the exact centre is the 53rd, as you will readily see, and the centre of the 53rd chapter is those four words, "He bare our iniquity." The soul of the whole prophecy is in those four words, and, as that prophecy constitutes the soul of the Old Testament, the soul of the Old Testament is in those words. When John the Baptist came, preceding the Christ, the last and greatest of the prophets, who in himself and his message summed up all that the prophets had spoken, he said, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord." The greatest of the sons of men was content to be nothing but a finger pointing and a voice proclaiming, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." He taught three great truths, a day of judgment coming, a Messiah coming, and a sacrifice for sin when the Messiah came—three fundamental truths. The four greatest truths of the Bible are the fact of sin, the fact of judgment, the fact of a coming Christ, and the fact of a completed atonement when He came. Those four words, "He bare

our sin," the substance of Isaiah's prophecy; the soul of the Old Testament, the substance of all John the Baptist's message, the substance of all the gospels, the substance of all the epistles, the substance of all the Book of Revelation, ~~I say again~~ are the most important four words put together in the Word of God.

In studying this theme I found that ~~There were~~ seven passages in the New Testament, all of which contain these words, or almost exactly the same words; for it is one of the marks of a fundamental truth that you have to repeat it in various forms in order to impress it. That is what God has done in the Bible. Seeing that these four words are so immensely important that they lie under the whole system of Christianity, the hope of sinners and the hope of saints, He puts them together over and over again in the New Testament in very slightly different forms, but in the same thought precisely.

First of all, I want to give you these seven passages. The passage before us is the first of them. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." The second passage is in the 9th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, at the 28th verse: "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time, without sin unto salvation." The third passage is in the 2nd Corinthians, 5th chapter, 21st verse: "He hath made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." This is another verse expressing the same thought. The next passage is in the 1st Peter, 2nd chapter, and 24th verse: "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness, by whose stripes we are healed." The next passage is in Titus, the 2nd

chapter and 14th verse: "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify us unto Himself, a peculiar people, zealous of good works." The same thought. Then in Galatians, the 1st chapter and the 4th verse: "Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world," or, properly, "this present evil age." "Gave Himself for our sins"; five words, but the same thought. The other is in the 1st Peter, 2nd chapter and 21st verse: "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps." The same thought.

Not only have we these seven passages, but no two passages go over the same ground. I wish you to notice the exact similarity of the language used to express the effects of Christ's work. "He bare our sin." "Made sin for us." "Bare the sins of many." "He once suffered for sin." "Gave Himself for us." "Gave Himself for our sins." "Suffered for us." There are the seven statements, very brief, about the character of Christ's substitution and vicarious work. But all the rest of these passages is dissimilar. For instance, "He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." "He bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins should live unto righteousness, by whose stripes ye were healed." "He once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." "He gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us unto Himself a peculiar people." "Gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age." "Suffered for us, leaving us an example." So, while we have the seven statements, as I have said, almost exactly similar, and almost exactly in the same language, the results of

Christ's work are expressed in seven different forms. Suppose we take these passages in order.

1. "Once offered to bear the sins of many": what does that call to our attention? There was a great day called the Day of Atonement, of which we read in the 16th chapter of the Book of Leviticus. On that great day of atonement that which was represented to the people in a kind of pictorial form was the taking away of sin. There were two kids, one slain, the other led by the hand of a fit man into the desert place, away from the camp. The kid that was slain represented the guilt of sin put away by blood. The kid that was led away into the desert place, never more to appear before the camp and bring back the thought of their sins to the people, represented the memory of sin being put away, the remembrance of sin being put away, so that it was no longer an occasion of interrupted intercourse and communion with God.

The expression "bare the sins of many" is the very expression used about the kid that was slain and the kid that was led out into the desert place. Christ was offered to bear the sins of many. That text calls back the day of atonement. It tells us that what these two kids represented the Christ fulfilled. His blood puts away guilt; His intercession removes even the sense of sin from between us and God.

The scapegoat was never to come back to bring the sins of the people to remembrance. But our scapegoat is coming back. "To them that look for Him will He appear the second time, without sin unto salvation." He is coming back, not to bring our sins to our remembrance, but to bring us a full and perfect salvation, such as we never can have until He returns to bring it to us and fulfil all the promises of the word.

2. Take the second passage, "made sin for us." "He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be

made the righteousness of God in Him." Here are two very strongly contrasted words. One is "sin," the other is "righteousness"; and the expression, "made sin," calls to our mind the sin offering and the trespass offering. There were five offerings of which we read in Leviticus. One was the burnt offering; then the meat offering; and then the thank offering; and then there were the sin offering and the trespass offering. The sin offering and the trespass offering were offered for sin and trespass, and those offerings were regarded as unclean. They were burnt to ashes, without the camp. Now, Jesus Christ was "made sin"—not a sin offering simply. He was counted as sin, and He was dealt with as sin by God in judgment. That constituted the atonement. He took the place of sinners, and He took the place of their sin before God. And now He had righteousness that was infinite, and here is an exchange. Our sin He takes. His righteousness we take. There is change of place. The righteous man takes the sinner's place; the sinner takes the righteous man's place. God looks on the righteous man as a sinner, and visits Him with penalty. God looks on the sinner as righteous and visits him with blessing and approval. What does that call to our mind? ~~As I have said,~~ The sin offering and the trespass offering. Jesus Christ, in being made the righteousness of God unto us, that we might in Him become the righteousness of God, recalls to us all those offerings that were made for the sins and the trespasses of God's people.

13. What is the next passage? He "suffered for us, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us unto God." To bring us unto God is to present us as acceptable, and the idea is that once we could not come near to God because we were filthy and vile, and God could not look upon us with any complacency or forbearance. "Thou

art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look upon iniquity." So we were far off. Christ brought us nigh. Read that passage in Ephesians: "We who some time were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." What does that recall? Why, the laws of cleansing in Leviticus. For instance, take the laws about the leper. A leper was a walking parable of death and judgment. Leprosy was not simply regarded by the Jews as a disease; it was regarded as the curse of God. When Miriam offended God she was smitten with leprosy, and was shut out of the camp seven days. When Uzziah went into the temple of God, and his heart was lifted up in arrogance and rebellion, and he seized the censer to burn incense, and resisted the remonstrance of the priest and would not go out of the temple, God smote him with leprosy in the forehead. The priests wore on the forehead the forefront of the mitre, with the sentence, "Holiness to the Lord"; and so, because he had undertaken to do the office of a priest without having the right to do it, God, instead of "Holiness to the Lord," wrote the curse of God on his forehead, in the pale, livid hue of leprosy; and he saw that God had smitten him, and he hastened to go out, and he dwelt to the day of his death in a separate house.

Now, you see there the curse of God. A leper represented the curse of God in a human form, warning men of uncleanness, bidding them to keep away from him lest they should be defiled, living in a separate house, having no relations with clean people, not coming into contact with clean people, being obliged to cry out, "Unclean," and to carry a stick when he went anywhere to keep people away who might, perhaps, not hear his cry. The leper represents the sinner, cursed of God, bearing the curse of God on his forehead, walking through the midst of men, as I have said, a parable of

death and judgment. Now, just as the leper when he was cleansed was examined by the priest, so that he who had been shut out of the camp, being cleansed, might be allowed to come near and do holy service, Jesus Christ takes the leper of sin, and takes away his guilt, and removes the curse of God from him, and leads him up near God; so that, as the first of these representations brought to our mind the day of atonement, with the two slain kids, and as the second representation brought to our mind the sin offering and the trespass offering, with the exchange of places between the victim and the sinner, this brings to our mind the law of cleansing in Leviticus, and shows us that Christ fulfils the cleansing which is prescribed for the leper from whom God has removed the curse.

The next of these passages is, "He bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness." What additional idea is conveyed here? Before, we had "made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him"; but here there is something more than that. Here is death to sin, and life to righteousness. What does this recall? We have spoken of those other three offerings that were distinguished from the sin offering and the trespass offering, because they were called sweet savour offerings. The sin and the trespass offerings were supposed to be burnt to ashes, and to have no sweet savour in the nostrils of God; but in the case of the burnt offering, the greatest of all the sweet savour offerings, when it is described as being burnt the Hebrew language uses another word. The word translated "burnt" in this case means to ascend in flame. The flame of the sin offering and the trespass offering was supposed to go downward; and the flame of the sweet savour offering was supposed to go upward and bear its incense to God;

so that, while the burnt offering was actually burnt on the altar, it was supposed to have risen to God, not to have been turned into ashes, but to have risen to God. There is an old tradition, which very likely is true, that the way that God expressed his pleasure in Abel's offering was that the flame ascended, and that the way that He expressed His displeasure with Cain's offering was that the flame descended. But, whether that be true or not, the Jew always regarded the sin and the trespass offerings as offerings rejected, identified with sin, and the burnt offering as an accepted offering identified with grace and favour and acceptance.

Here we have the very idea suggested to us. We, being dead to sin, like the burnt offering, burnt to ashes, shall live unto righteousness, like that other offering going up in fire to God, and being accepted with God, not counted by God as dead but living; not as being turned to ashes, but being turned into incense; not as going downward, but as going upward; not as perishing, but as surviving the flame. And so Jesus Christ calls to our mind now the whole round of the sweet savour offering. He who was the kid slain for sin, and the kid of the goats taken away into the wilderness to carry away the remembrance of sin, and He who was the sin and the trespass offerings identified with our guilt, and removing our guilt, was also the sweet savour offering, to bear up before God the new life that comes out of the ashes of our death to sin.

The next of these passages is, "He gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Now, here is a changed thought not at all suggested in the others. Here is the word "redemption," which means to buy back, to purchase a slave out of slavery or bondage; and here is the purification of the

people of God, so that they shall be led to serve God with newness of life and hope and joy. What does that recall? The year of jubilee. When the day of atonement came to its close, once in forty-nine years, the trumpet sounded for what was called the year of jubilee; and in that year of jubilee three things took place. Every slave was set free; all debts were cancelled; and lost estates were restored to their owners. And there was another peculiar thing about that year of jubilee. If a man that had been a servant to another man, when it was proclaimed to him that the time of his deliverance was come, refused to be delivered, and said, "I would rather serve my master than be a free man," then they took him to the doorpost of the house in which his master dwelt, and they bored his ear through with an awl, fastening his ear for a moment to the doorpost. This proclaimed the fact that he would not be separated from his master, and that by his own act he was fastened, as it were, to the doorpost of his master's house. And so it is said of Christ in the fortieth Psalm, "Mine ear hast Thou bored. I delighted to do Thy will, O my God," as though Christ Himself so magnified the privilege of service that he would rather remain a servant than not be a servant. You see that in these words you have a reference to the events of the year of jubilee—the redemption from all iniquity, the purchasing of the slave out of bondage, the paying of his debts, and the restoring of the lost estate, and then the purifying of God's people in a holy service so that they are willing to have their ears bored to the blood-stained doorpost, and delight themselves in yielding what they have and are to their Master for the good work of a serviceable life.

There is another passage that is needed to complete this review. Christ gave Himself for our sins, that He might redeem us from this present evil world, or evil age. What

additional thought is presented here? ~~There are two~~ great ages in the Bible, not to speak of others. There is the present evil age, and there is the age to come when Christ is to be reigning in millennial glory. And here we are told that Christ came and gave Himself for us and suffered for us, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, and translate us into the age to come, ~~which is the real thought.~~ You will notice that in the Bible there are two types of the present evil age. One is Egypt, and the other is Babylon; Egypt where the children of Israel began their bondage, Babylon where they had their last great period of captivity. Egypt represents the world. They came out from the world when they entered on the service of God. Babylon represents the world. They went back into the world when they apostatized from God; and the crime in all cases in which the children of Israel were carried captive was that they trusted in man and not in God. "Cursed be the man that putteth his confidence in man, that maketh the arm of flesh his trust." That is the substance of apostasy, for while you are a sinner you trust in your own righteousness. That is the soul of apostasy. If when you become a child of God you turn back to your own righteousness and the beggarly elements which you have forsaken, and lean on the arm of flesh, and confide in forms and ceremonies or anything else except the blood and work of Christ, that is apostasy from Christ.

~~That is not going back into Egypt; that is getting into~~ ~~captivity in Babylon.~~ So this same Jesus Christ who is represented as fulfilling all that the day of atonement suggested, all that the law of cleansing suggested, all that the sin and the trespass offerings suggested, all that the sweet savour offering suggested, all that the great year of jubilee suggested, is also represented as fulfilling all that the escape from Egypt suggests, or the return

from the captivity of Babylon suggests. He delivers His people from this present evil world. He shows them how to depend on Him, and not on themselves; how to depend on Him and not on their own fellow-men; how to rest in His grace, and not on what the Church can do; how to depend on prayer and devotion, and not on forms and on ceremonies. He shows them how to rest on a finished work as well as a finished atonement, an intercession that is always finished and yet never finished; so that we who have been saved from the guilt of sin and the power of sin and the penalty of sin, and who are to be saved from the presence of sin, may be saved from apostatizing from God, or going back to the beggarly elements of this world.

The seventh passage is a very sweet one. ~~It does not fall within the circle of this history of Israel, as I conceive, but it adds another blessed thought.~~ "He left us an example that we should follow His steps." You know, there was a remnant of Israel saved. Even at the time when Baal-worship overspread the whole community, there were seven thousand that had not bowed the knee, and God has always had, even in the times of apostasy, a select remnant of people who have been true to Him, and He always will have. It would seem as though this leaving us an example, that we should follow His steps, refers to that precious remnant of grace who, by looking to Jesus Christ, and not to man, comparing themselves with Him, and not with others or with their own best attainments, but just looking at Him as a boy looks at the copy in his copybook, writing down beneath the copy in exact conformity with the copy—for that is the very word used here—just a written copy, leaving us a written copy that we should imitate it—it seems as though the suggestion was here made to us that the secret of the salvation of the remnant, and

the fidelity of God's few witnesses in the midst of a general and widespread apostasy, is this—that they keep the Master's writing before them, and they seek to follow in everything the example of their blessed Lord.

I have already said that these few precious and primary truths are the foundation of character and the foundation of destiny, and from all our wanderings we come back to that. It is said that the late Bishop of Durham, who was one of the wisest and greatest men that the English Church has ever known, who wrote so learnedly, and taught so grandly, and preached so magnificently, during his later days was afflicted with a long lingering illness, and so retired a great deal into quiet, and his friends thought that he must be studying up some great theological theme such as he had given his life to defending and expounding; and when they asked him what he was thinking of, he said, "There are three or four great truths that I keep thinking about and praying over all the time." The great man came back, from all his wanderings in philosophy and theology and science, to just two or three of these great truths, and this was one of them. And then a story is likewise told of Bishop Butler, who has been called the Melchisedek of the English Church, because there was no one before him like him, and no one after him like him. He seemed to stand alone, without predecessor or successor. He fell into darkness in his last days. Temptation and a horror of great darkness fell upon him, and his friend and chaplain was trying to comfort him, and present the great truths of the Bible. "Oh, yes," he said, "I have no doubt of these great truths, but the question is, Are they for me? Are they for me?" And God just put it into his chaplain's mouth to say, "Him that cometh unto Me I will in nowise cast out." He said, "That is so comforting and so precious," and those

were the last words of Bishop Butler. And we recall the testimony of C. H. Spurgeon, who, in preaching at his vast church, said to his friends, "There are four words that I have lived by and expect to die by: 'He died for me.'" If you believe that precious message, then it is all that you need for this life, or for the life to come.

A dear friend of mine was explaining what it meant to receive the kingdom of God as a little child. "Now," he said, "how does a little child receive anything? Why, here is a little infant just beginning to talk, and the little child falls down in the road and gets up besmeared, and says 'Mamma, wash me. Mamma, feed me. Mamma, carry me. Mamma, dress me.' The little child cannot wash herself, feed herself, dress herself, carry herself, so she just receives the washing, and the clothing, and the feeding, and the carrying." And, as my friend said, that is the way to receive the kingdom of God. Just come to the Lord Jesus, and say, "Now, Lord, I am most filthy, and I cannot wash myself; wash me. I am hungry, and I cannot feed myself; feed me. I am naked, and I cannot clothe myself; clothe me. I am weary, and I cannot stand or walk; carry me." If you are ready to receive the kingdom of God as a little child, and just take what Jesus has done for you in that simple way, you will find in His Cross the balm for all your woes.

III

Love for the Loveless

“But God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.”—*Romans* v. 8.

WE often say that love is an attribute of God, but does this express the full truth? The Apostle John tells us in his first epistle that “God is love.” Love is not merely an attribute; it is the very essence and substance and being of God. This passage sets before us this love. The word “commendeth” here does not mean simply the act of recommending. The thought of the apostle—the thought of the Holy Ghost behind the apostle—is not that God commendeth to us His love; it is love toward us that He commendeth; and the commendeth means to set in a striking light, to exhibit, to evince, to hold up for our admiration. It implies a contrast with all other love—something beyond and above the highest ideal of human affection.

This text presents before us the love, the gift, and the object. As I have said, the love of God is peculiar; we use the same word oftentimes in different senses; and we use the same word “love” in different senses. The Apostle John, who had a remarkable insight into the love of God, and was chosen by the Spirit of God specially to write upon love, and whose first epistle is everywhere full of this great theme, says, “We love Him because He first loved us.” Now, in that very passage you will see that the word love is used in two quite different

senses, for it is quite obvious that our love to God and God's love to us are quite different. We are accustomed to divide between what we term a love of complacency and a love of benevolence. And as these are very common terms, it may be best to understand the difference. The love of complacency means a love that is drawn out from us by the discovery of lovely qualities in other people; but the love of benevolence means the love that is drawn out from us without regard to the lovely qualities discovered in others, but for the sake of the good that we can do and the blessing that we can impart. It is the love of complacency when a man, becoming acquainted with an intellectual, cultivated, virtuous maiden, feels his heart drawn out to her by the beauty of her character, or when one friend, discovering in another friend amiable, attractive, and beautiful traits, gives love on account of the discovery of these charms of character. That is the love of complacency. But when to a beggar, perhaps a sinner degraded and filthy down below your social level, exhibiting perhaps nothing but the most unattractive and repulsive features to you—when to a beggar you give alms, when you seek to clothe his nakedness, to feed his hunger, to quench his thirst, to provide him with a home; when you surround one that is personally disagreeable to you, and perhaps hateful to you, with the ministries of affection—that is love of benevolence. There is a great deal of difference between these two sorts of love. The love of complacency is in a sense voluntary; you cannot help but love what is lovable; if you discover what is lovable, your admiration is drawn out, and if you are virtuous yourself you cannot but respond to the attraction of beauty and excellence in character.

Then the love of complacency depends upon acquaintance. You must know the object and you must discover

the qualities of the object before this love of complacence can be exercised. And then, moreover, the love of complacence is exclusive. It has comparatively few objects; it delights in them, it rejoices in their possession, and it desires not to extend very largely the exercise of its affection. And then the love of complacence is intensive; it reaches right down to the depths of our being; it takes hold of all that there is in us; if there is power to respond, there is a response; if there is virtue, it must exercise its affection, as I have said, when virtue is discovered in others, and so the love of complacence is partial and oftentimes intensely partial.

But now look, on the other hand, at the love of benevolence. The love of benevolence is never exercised involuntarily. It is a voluntary love. It is not evoked from us by the discovery of beauties in others, it comes simply from a determination. It is a principle of love. And then, again, it is extensive and not intensive. It has broad range and scope. Instead of being partial, it is impartial and universal. It does not even depend upon the acquaintance which we have with other people. It bestows its blessings somewhat as God bestows His blessings, impartially and universally. Not, as I have said, exclusive, but inclusive; not intensive, but extensive; not partial, but impartial; not selfish, but universal. That is the love of God to us; we love God, that is the love of complacence. We discover beauty in God, and we respond to it. "We love Him because He first loved us." That is the love of benevolence. He did not discover beautiful qualities in us that He loved us. He loved us despite all our unloveliness, and therefore He loved us with a benevolent love. Let us, first of all, get hold of the character of the love of God. It is a benevolent love, a voluntary love, an extensive, impartial, universal, unselfish love that yearns to give to the most

unworthy, yearns to give to everybody alike, yearns to give without reference to any merit or desert in us. And in that very fact that God's love is such a love, He exhibits that love, sets it up in a striking light before us in contrast to any other love of which the world knows anything.

Now, this love has made a very marked and wonderful exhibition of itself in what it has done for us in its activity toward us; for we must remember that love is a force; and force demands activity; for instance, gravitation is a force; it is impossible to imagine gravitation as sleeping or being dormant. It must act, and it must act in every direction, and it must act always. And the greatest forces of which we know anything are forces that show themselves to be such by their perpetual activity. Fire must have vent. A stream must have a channel. And all love must have an exhibition and an expression. And because God not only has love, but *is* love, He must act, and act in a loving way. The very word "benevolent" implies that love gives. Benevolence means well wishing, and well wishing leads to beneficence, which is well doing; and the very fact that we call this love a benevolent love, or a love of benevolence, implies giving; and so the activity of love is the activity of giving; a universal giving, an impartial giving, a perpetual giving, a giving because it is God's nature to give, just as it is the nature of the sun to shine and the nature of the stream to flow. The measure of a gift is always determined by what it is that is given, and by how much it costs to give it; and I want you to notice that God gave His only begotten Son. Did you ever think that it is a greater thing to give a person than to give anything else; a mere object, a mere material thing. If you go to India you will see what is known as the Taj Mahal, the finest building in the world, more magnificent by far

than St. Paul's in London or St. Peter's in Rome; costly, pure, symmetrical; a type and ideal of beauty made of sculptured marble and sculptured ivory, and inlaid with gold and gems, with sentences of the Koran, the sacred book of the Mahommedan. It is a perfect wonder of the world. It was erected by an Indian prince to commemorate his love for his departed wife; it is really a kind of mausoleum monument of the dead. Great gift, costly gift, magnificent gift, wonderful tribute of love; but remember this: Give us an architect or builder, give us royal riches, and we can open other mines where marbles lie and golden gems are found, and we can build another structure that shall equal the Taj Mahal and, perhaps, surpass it in beauty and symmetry and costliness and elegance. But you can never duplicate a person, though you may duplicate a building.

God did not give a world of one entire and perfect diamond, a world of gold and gems. Why, He could have rolled ten thousand worlds along the floors of heaven and sacrificed them all for the sake of men, and it would not have cost Him anything, for by one effort of His will He could turn all those worlds into being again after they had been destroyed or sacrificed. But God had one only begotten Son; not a thing, not a gem, not a mine of gold, not a world of riches, but a Person; one Person, the only Person that God could give; His one Son, His only begotten Son, His well-beloved Son, and He gave Him as a sacrifice. Now, when we talk of the death of Christ on the cross we too often forget that the whole life of Christ was in a sense a death. When He left the throne of glory and laid aside the mantle of His royal power and the sceptre of royal dominion—when He came down and consented to be born of a woman as a babe born in Bethlehem, born in a stable, laid in a manger, to wear the clothes of poverty, to have

no place where to lay His head, to be poor and forsaken and despised and outcast, to be hated and mocked and insulted, to be scourged, to have a crown of thorns on His brow where the crown of universal empire sat, and to die on the cross as a malefactor, and to have enemies pass by and mock and deride His dying agony. Why, the whole life of Christ was a death from His birth to His crucifixion. Humiliation, mockery, insult, injury. I never like to speak of what must have been the feelings of God during the dying agonies of Christ. It is quite too august a subject for any human being to discuss, but if any of you who is a father has ever stood over one son and seen the dying agonies of that son, and witnessed those dying agonies for hours, you know something of what the feeling of a father must be over an only son that is undergoing the pangs of dissolution. And what do you think must have been the emotions of God the Father as He looked down from Heaven and saw His only begotten and well-beloved Son crucified and hanging on the cross and suffering the mortal pangs of dissolution from the third hour until the ninth hour of that awful day of tragedy? Could God have done anything more than this? He gave a Person, the Person, the one present that was the object of His intense and infinite love, His only begotten and well-beloved Son. He gave Him to a life of humiliation, a life of mockery, to a life of insult, hanging in crucifixion as a malefactor between two thieves. God sets His love before us in most striking light in contrast to all other love, in that He gave all He had to give, the sacred Person of His own Son. He gave Him to the sacrifice of the cross.

Now, look at the object of that love "for us." And who were we? Those words in the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans describe our condition, and it is quite remarkable that those words grow in force and

meaning as they proceed. In the sixth verse we are told "While we were yet without strength." The word means helplessly weak—"In due time Christ died for the ungodly;" and then, again, "While we were yet sinners Christ died for us;" and then again, "When we were enemies." Look at these four words, helplessly weak, ungodly, positively and degradedly sinful, and not only so, but enemies, adversaries, hostile to God. The apostle has been telling us why it is that God sets His love in such striking contrast with all the human exhibitions of love. He says, "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die." But we were neither righteous nor good. Men have sacrificed their lives for other men, but it has been where the love of complacency has been evoked, as in the case of Damon and Pythias. One of these friends offered to die for the other, and would have died for the other had not the other made his appearance at the last moment. And then the sovereign who was about to have executed one of them was so much struck at their devotion to one another that he pardoned the offender, and begged to be admitted into the circle of a friendship so wonderful.

Men have been known to die for each other, friend for friend. They have died for a good man, they have died perhaps for a righteous man, though not so often, but Christ says, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend." It is the ideal of human love that a man for his friend's sake lays down his own life. And yet remember this, that where men's love ends God's love only begins. When you have reached the highest ideal of human sacrifice and human affection you are only on the mountain-top with the heavens infinitely above you, and it is in the heavens that God dwells. Not until you can estimate the difference between the

height of the highest mountain of the earth and the great distance from the earth to Sirius, or those great stars that sparkle in the firmament, can you begin to express or understand the difference between the height of human love and the height of the Divine love. "Greater love hath no man than this, that he die for his friends." "But God commends His love towards us in that while we were weak and helpless, while we were godless, while we were enemies, Christ died for us"; and if you look in the life of Christ for His miracles I will tell you what the greatest miracle is. It is the utterance of that prayer on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." When we were throwing back in His teeth His very agonising groans; when we were mocking and insulting and deriding Him, He prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And that is the most stupendous miracle that Christ ever wrought, the miracle of a prayer for such sinners as they were.

I want to get before us, in conclusion, this idea of Christ dying for us. Substitution, taking another's place. You see the apostle does not leave us to misunderstand what this dying for us means. Let us look at two or three of the other phrases here; "Christ died for the ungodly; Christ died for us; when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son by whom we have received the atonement and reconciliation." You see there might possibly be a doubt as to what it means by Christ dying for us; but when we are told that the effect of Christ's death was that while we were ungodly and sinful and enemies to God we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, then we begin to understand that Christ's death for us implies such a substitution, such a taking of our place as that the enmity between God and us is done away, and sin

no longer becomes an obstacle to fellowship and sympathy and union with the Lord Himself.

Blessed be God that the Bible tells its own story and explains its own terms. What is reconciliation? Reconciliation is the bringing together of parties who have been alienated from each other. The effect of sin was mutual alienation between God and men. God could not look with favour upon sinners, and sinners would not look with love upon God; so God and the sinner were hopelessly estranged but for the precious blood of Christ; and when Jesus Christ died for us, taking the sinner's place, bearing in His own body on the tree our guilt and the equivalent of our punishment, then it became possible for God to take us into favour and put away the mountain of our sins that was like an obstacle to all fellowship and communion and even practical acquaintance with God.

This doctrine of substitution is very sweet to my soul; it is so simple and so easily understood after all. Why, you cannot look into the depths of God's love, and you cannot look into the depths of Christ's sacrifice, but you can understand what the effects of it are. In the war in America for the preservation of the Union there was a Wisconsin mechanic, who was drafted into the army. He had a large family and a wife depending upon him. The wife was quite an invalid, and he himself a poor working man, with no reserve of funds saved, for he had scarcely been able to maintain his family, and there was a young man, a friend of his unmarried and without family, and he came forward and said, "I will go for you; I will take your place." And he insisted upon it. He went to the war, and in the Battle of Gettysburg he fell, mortally wounded, and when the news came up to Wisconsin that this friend had died on the field of battle, this poor mechanic, himself a carpenter, made a head-board worked in hard wood and as enduring as he could

make it, and he went with that headboard and worked his way down to Gettysburg and planted the board at the head of the grave. It bore the name of the young man who had been killed, and underneath were these four words, "He died for me." This is a simple, beautiful illustration of substitution. He went to the war for him, he went into the battle for him, he received the bullet for him, he died for him, and all that the man could do was to put up a headboard for him with the words, "He died for me."

But that was one friend dying for another. It was substitution, but it was the substitution of friendship. But Christ's is the substitution of the Eternal Friend for His enemies, persecutors, slanderers, crucifiers. When Erskine was called before the Scottish judges and told that if he did not stop preaching this glorious gospel of the grace of God, his life would be in peril, his answer was, "I will never stop preaching the glorious gospel of the grace of God until you can blot out and obliterate that sentence in which Christ says to the unbelieving Jews, 'My Father giveth you the true bread from Heaven,' and until you can blot out and obliterate that sentence from the Word of God will I cease to carry the Bread of Life to the hungering souls of my fellow-men." And so I would say, let those who know this precious gospel go to the stake rather than keep a silent tongue when the world round about us is dying without Christ, and we know that He died for us.

There is a very beautiful biography of Joseph Neesima, the Japanese, who founded the Doshisha or the one-aim school for the training of Japanese young men for the ministry. He was a native Japanese. Very early in life, when he was a mere lad, he made up his mind that none of these gilded images of Buddha could save them. He saw them in the wrought iron plain castings. He saw

them when they were gilded iron. He saw them with the gold leaf laid in plating over the iron casting, and he said, "It is impossible that a piece of iron, though it bear the image of a God and is gilded with gold leaf, can do men any good"; and he threw away his idols, and would have nothing to do with idolatry. But he had no religion; he had not heard yet of the Saviour of mankind. He got hold of a Chinese Bible. He took up that Bible. He knew a little Chinese; enough to read what was in the Bible after a little painstaking effort; and the very first words he came to were the words of the first verse of Genesis: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." He said immediately, "I never saw this book before; I know nothing about it, but there is more wisdom in that one sentence than in any of the sacred books I have ever seen that have to do with my own religion." He could not rest until he had a chance of owning one of these Bibles for himself, for this was nothing but an abridged copy. He heard that these Bibles had been printed in America, and he longed to go to America. So he escaped in the disguise of a servant on a vessel bound for Hong Kong, and while the vessel was stopping at Hong Kong and he was trying to get a vessel to the United States, he went into a little shop in Hong Kong and there found a Chinese New Testament, and bought it by sacrificing for it a little body sword that he wore. And then on the vessel, as he worked his way to America, he read that Bible in every spare hour; and when he came to John iii. 16: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," he said, "In the first chapter of Genesis and the first verse I found wisdom for my mind, but here I have found wisdom for my heart." And as that first verse had led him to God the Creator, that

sixteenth verse of the third chapter of John had led him to God the Redeemer, and he went back to Japan and there established that Doshisha and occupied himself during the rest of his life in training the young men of his own native country to preach the gospel of the grace of God, and to tell men that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Joseph Neesima will rise in the judgment to condemn hundreds of people who have been habitual attendants at the churches of our country. They have heard the precious gospel of the grace of God preached in their ears till they have become gospel hardened. They have had the exhibitions of the love of God presented to them until they have become tame and commonplace and ineffective. Here is a young man who before he heard of this Bible and this Christ cast away his idols; his first glimpse into the Bible showed him that God was the Creator, and that that Bible must be the revelation of Him, and his second glimpse into the Bible showed him that God was the Redeemer, for no such love was ever known among men as the love of God. That was foreshadowed in the sixteenth verse of the third chapter of John. Down on his knees in the cabin of that boat he went, and in the darkness he prayed to this new God. He said, "O God, I know very little about Thee, but Thou art the God that made the Heavens and the earth, and didst give Thy only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth should not perish; now show me how to take this gift." And God showed him how to take the gift. He poured His grace into His soul; He revealed His love to a poor sinner; and that Japanese will stand in the judgment and, by his presence at the right hand of God, will condemn hundreds and perhaps thousands

whose privileges were far greater, and whose opportunities were more extensive. "God commends His love towards us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Being reconciled to God by the death of His Son, we shall be saved by His life." A salvation by the blood on the cross; a salvation by His love on high; one act on the cross atoning for us, but a life on the throne interceding for us. One act completing the finished work of redemption, but an everlasting series of acts at the right hand of the throne of God supporting the soul that He saves, and strengthening the penitent and believing sinner in the new way of life in which by the grace of God he is treading. I want to plead with you, in the name of Jesus, that you will let this love come into your hearts and make a new man or a new woman of you, so that you may go and write down over your lost and ruined life, "Jesus died for me."

IV

The Soul's First Quest

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”—*Matthew* vi. 33.

THIS is the imperial sermon of the ages. It is the longest discourse which is attributed to our Lord in the pages of the New Testament. It requires close and careful study to reveal its symmetry. It is by no means a mere collection of wise sayings like the Book of Proverbs, by no means a disjointed discourse without continuous thought or logical order. It is one of the most magnificent of all the words spoken in the ears of men. It is, in a sense, one word—this whole discourse; that is to say, it is one complete message given to the sons of men. Careful attention to the whole discourse will reveal its parts. It is divided up into sections, but even the sections are continuous. Their order could not be changed without violation of the symmetry. For instance, our Lord begins by the outlining of the character of a true disciple. Then He goes on to speak next of such a disciple in the world as shown by two very familiar and simple illustrations, the light and the salt. Then He goes on to correct certain evils that enter into human conduct, and still more to strike at the sources of the evil in human character. Then He gives us certain great precepts which are to guide us in external and internal righteousness.

Now, the verse which I desire to consider is a kind of centre round which the whole discourse revolves. Looking backward, it interprets what goes before. Looking forward, it anticipates what follows. And I have no hesitation in saying that I think it is the most important of all the verses of the Sermon on the Mount.

If we should examine the passage of which this is the conclusion, that section of the discourse which begins with the nineteenth verse, we should find in the course of these fifteen verses, including the thirty-fourth, undoubtedly here given ten great arguments for seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. The whole section refers to the inferior things and the superior things, the things that men actually do seek first, and the one thing that ought to be sought first; and, as our Lord is going to teach us this great lesson about making the supreme thing practically supreme, He begins by referring to the lower objects which absolutely do engross and absorb the attention of men. He says, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth where moth and dust do corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." There is the first of the arguments. You ought, first of all, to love the kingdom of God. Your heart will always be where your treasure is. Now, where do you want your heart to be? Where do you honestly think it ought to be? Did you ever think of the ethics of language? That is, of the moral lessons that are taught us in the very words we use? Take that word "*miser*." It expresses the man who lays up for himself treasures upon earth. The Latin word *miser* means a wretch, and from it come the English words "miserable" and "misery," so that the very language men use serves to show us that in the common-sense of mankind that man who lays up treasure for himself is laying up wretched-

ness for himself. Take another example. It is a very common thing to say that such and such a man dies "possessed of a fortune." Why, it is a most melancholy statement. I suppose that the man ought to possess the fortune, not the fortune possess him. Yet there is many a man that both lives and dies "possessed of a fortune." The fortune is the owner, and it has got the man, holds him in a deadly grip, masters him at every point, masters his thoughts, masters his love, masters his conscience, masters his will, masters his speech, masters his energy. The fortune possesses the man, not the man the fortune. Now, where should your heart be? Just look beyond this world. Look into the great future. When you come to stand at the beginning of your true life, your immortality, and look back to this world with its three score years and ten of life, where will it seem to you then that your heart ought to have been fixed? "Where your treasure is there will your heart be also." Now, put your treasure where you honestly think your heart ought to be. That is the first argument. It is a masterly argument.

Then the second argument of our Lord for seeking first the kingdom of God is "The light of the body is the eye; therefore if thine eye be single"—that is, sees a single object—"thy whole body shall be full of light; but if thine eye be evil"—that is, sees a double object, or sees dimly and indistinctly—"thy whole body shall be full of darkness." Now, what is the office of the eyes to the body? First of all, the eye is the inlet for light, and, secondly, the eye is the organ by which the mind communicates with the external world. The eye, therefore, is the type of the mind which answers in our intellectual life and spiritual life the same purpose as the eye answers in the body. The mind serves to receive impressions from external things, and to communicate the

thoughts that are within us to others outside us. And so the second argument of our Lord is this: "Do not be double-minded. You cannot be absorbed in two things at the same time. There is only one thing that ought to absorb, or is worthy to absorb, your thought, and that is the unseen and the external rather than the visible and temporal. Do not try to look at heaven and earth at once. Cast your eyes to that which ought to fix your gaze, and which alone is worthy to enamour and entrance your vision."

Now, what is the third argument of our Lord? "No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other"—which refers to the feelings—"or else he will hold to the one and despise (or neglect) the other"—which refers to external action. If here are two masters who are mutually at enmity, and whose service would lead in different directions, it is impossible that you should love both of them at the same time, and it is impossible that you should serve both of them at the same time; and so, you see, as the first argument addresses the heart, and the second the mind, the third addresses the will. "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." Whom will you take for your master? Will you take mammon or God? Will you bow down to a golden calf, or bow down to the Almighty and Everlasting One? You see that this whole discourse is a systematic discourse, though the divisions do not appear, except as you examine closely. They are there, just as the skeleton of a man is inside of the flesh, although the bones may not stick out. The bones of this discourse are the framework on which it is laid.

Let us look at the other arguments here. "Is not the life more than meat and the body than raiment?" Here is the fourth argument. There is only one thing that is of supreme value. Therefore, seek that first. Meat

sustains life, but the life is of more value than the meat that sustains it; otherwise, the meat would not be subordinated to the life. Here is the raiment that clothes the body, and the body that is clothed by the raiment; but the body is greater and more valuable than the raiment; otherwise, the raiment would not be used as a minister to the body. Now, the Lord says, "Think more of your life than you do of meat that sustains it, and more of your body than you do of the raiment which clothes it"; and then He reminds us how the fowls of the air sow not and reap not, nor gather into barns, and yet our Heavenly Father feeds them. Ye are much better than they. The lilies of the field toil not, neither do they spin; and yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed in a fabric as wonderful as the fabric of the leaves and flowers, the stamens and petals, of the lily. Set your heart, your mind, your will, on that which is of the highest value, and not upon that which is subordinate to it, which has a temporary value only, and only then as it contributes to that which is permanent.

Then, again, "Which of you by faking thought can add to his stature one cubit?" or as it might be rendered "can add to his life-term one span?" Here is the fifth argument. Worry avails nothing. You may worry all you will, but your worry will not bring you meat or drink or raiment or a home. You can take as much anxious thought as you please, but you will not make your body to grow in stature a cubit. You will not make your life to extend over a single span by your worrying. Now, if you are going to take anxious thought, why not take anxious thought for that in which anxious thought will accomplish something? To be anxious about being like God and about extending God's kingdom will pay you for your holy anxiety—shall end in greater sanctifi-

cation and greater serviceableness, but all your worry about this world will not avail you.

Then our Lord gives us His next argument. "All these things do the nations of the world seek after." The child of God ought not to identify himself with godless and faithless people. The way of the world is to centre all thought on things that perish, and pass anxious days and solicitous nights about "What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" But you have got a Heavenly Father. Are you not ashamed to identify yourself with those that know no God and acknowledge no Father?

Then our Lord gives us another argument. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." I have just said that worry does not avail. It will not give you food, or raiment, or a home, or lengthen out your life by as much as a span. But while worry cannot provide you against the future, it may serve to give you a great deal of trouble in advance. What a subtle suggestion is here. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Suppose that there is want before you. Why make the want ten times as severe in its pressure by anticipating it before it comes? Suppose that you are going to be sick, even with long and lingering illness, what is the use of making your soul sick while you are yet in health by anticipating the day of illness? There are thousands of people who "die a thousand deaths in fearing one," and suffer a thousand ills in anticipating one. Worry, I repeat, is not only needless, but it is sinful, for it implies distrust of God. "Your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." That is our Lord's next argument—the Fatherhood of God.

I wish that all of us could feel this great truth. Just the moment you come under the shelter of the blood

of your elder brother, the second Adam, you have come into the family of God, and He is your Father. And henceforth there is not a promise that the Father has ever addressed to His children that is not for you. The Father's care is over you, even over the least of all things that pertain to you. The very hairs of your head are all numbered. Though there be on the normal scalp three hundred thousand hairs as they have been counted by those who have been careful enough to see just how many hairs find a lodgment in a healthy scalp, there is not one of those three hundred thousand hairs that can fall out of that scalp without your Heavenly Father knowing of the fact. And if a thing that has so little to do with your comfort as the loss of a hair, or with your impoverishment as the loss of a hair, is thought of by your Father, do you think that He will see you starving and not care, or suffering the pangs of disease and not care, or coming down into the valley of the shadow of death and not care? My brother, where is your confidence in the fatherhood of God? "Like as a father pitieth his children, the Lord pitieth those that fear Him; for He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust." Just as soon as you take Jesus as your Saviour, just consider that henceforth the 91st Psalm is your abiding place, and go and take possession of the precious verses and promises of that Psalm. Look up and say, "My Father, Thy little child trusts Thee implicitly."

But then our Lord gives us one other argument for seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and that is a positive promise. "All these things shall be added unto you." He does not leave it to inference, from what we might expect from God as a Father; but He says positively that if you seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness

all these things—not part of them—“*all* these things *shall be* added”—not “may be added,” but “shall be added unto you.”

Notice that word “add.” There are such precious lessons in arithmetic in the Bible. Here is a sum in addition. Here are things that are needful for your daily wants. Instead of absorbing yourself in the seeking of those things, you seek that which is higher, and grander, and nobler, and ought to be supreme, and now the Lord gives you that which you have asked; and, as in the case of Solomon, He gives you supremely that which you have not asked. He says, “Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked those things for thyself first of all, behold I have given thee these that thou hast asked, and all other things I give thee which thou hast put in the inferior category and left comparatively out of sight.” That is God’s way of doing.

Now, in conclusion, let me try to make still more emphatic these precious words by showing you really what they mean. What is the kingdom of God, and what is the righteousness of God? We have seen that they ought to be sought first; but what are they that we are to seek first? A kingdom is a territory that is ruled over by a king. It may be, like the empire of Britain, very widespread; it may be scattered in very many colonies in different parts of the earth. But you know the kingdom when you come upon it by certain unmistakable signs. In my home in America on the Detroit River, the town of Windsor belongs to Canada. Detroit belongs to the American Republic; Windsor belongs to the Empire of Britain. Just the moment that we cross the Detroit River we are on English soil. There we see the Custom house with the arms of Great Britain upon it. There we see the red-coats passing up and down with the uniform of Great Britain. There we see floating over

public buildings the British flag, and in vessels lying in the haven the British streamer. We know that we are in a part of the kingdom of Great Britain over which the English Sovereign, and not the American President, rules. Now, when Christ sent out two disciples at a time, He said, "Go and preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is among you." Why? Because there was a little slice of the kingdom that went on those four legs. Wherever those disciples, in whose hearts Jesus Christ was enshrined and enthroned as king, went, there was a little colony of the universal kingdom walking among men. It is a sweet conception of the kingdom of God. "The kingdom of God is within you." Of course, it is, if you are a child of God. Your heart is a colony of the kingdom, and the universal king reigns there. I would He reigned more undisputed and alone.

Now, to seek the kingdom of God is to seek its extension. When you come where the flag of the devil is, and the coat of arms of the devil is, and the soldiers of the devil in their uniform, try to get the flag down from the masthead and down from the flagstaff, and put the banner of the Cross in its place. You try to get the uniform off of the soldiers and servants of the devil, and get the blood-red uniform of the kingdom of Christ upon you. You try to get the crest of arms of the heavenly kingdom, marked by the seal of the Spirit everywhere, where the devil's insignia are found. That is seeking the kingdom of God. You come across a poor outcast, a drunkard, a harlot, someone who is living in sin. Try and displace Satan as the ruling prince in that soul, and get the Prince of princes and the King of kings into that heart to rule, and you are seeking the kingdom of God. Why, the quest is as plain as day, and there is nothing else worth seeking. Even if you try to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, do it as Christ did, that your ministry

to the body may be the preparation for your ministry to the soul.

Now, what is it to seek God's righteousness? The righteousness of God means in the Gospel according to Matthew, and in the Sermon on the Mount, not what it means in Romans—a method of justification. It means adherence and conformity to the right. It is God-likeness. How am I to seek the righteousness of God, and to incorporate it in my life? That is what makes me a subject of the King, and an honour to the King; and so this simple text of Scripture bids us, first of all, seek to have the righteousness of God embodied in myself, and then, next, seek to have that same righteousness of God embodied in other people, to become myself a subject and servant of the King of kings, and then to try to make everybody with whom I come into contact a subject and servant of the same King of kings. And if you can tell me anything that can be put into words that is more worth making the first object of thought, and of love, and of choice than this, I should like to know what it is.

“*First.*” First in time. What a blessed thing it is when a little child begins to serve God as a child. The trouble is that, though we may be saved by a repentance in after life, it is at a bitter cost. The world and the flesh and the devil come in and pre-occupy us, and then Jesus Christ can only occupy us as these enemies are first displaced, like the Canaanites when the children of Israel went into Palestine. But when the little child begins to serve God before the heart, and mind, and choice, and life have been occupied with things that perish, there is very little displacement necessary in comparison. The Lord Jesus, instead of coming, as He did to the inn at Bethlehem, and finding no room and being crowded into a corner, finds a heart that as yet is com-

paratively open, and He takes possession ; and how many little children like Samuel, and John the Baptist, and Timothy, born of godly parents and bred of godly parents, and from a child knowing the Scriptures, have grown to be men and women magnificently furnished for all good works, and bearing comparatively few scars of sin, and knowing comparatively few of the evil habits that have been abandoned, coming up from behind, like the Egyptians from Egypt, to drag back into the slavery into which one once fell. Let us seek first the kingdom of God. Seek it early in life if you are in youth. Seek it at once, wherever you are in the point of your human pilgrimage ; and from this time forth, whatever, it may have been hitherto with you, let it be primary and not secondary, supreme and not subordinate. Take up your thought with the enamouring vision of God's righteousness in your soul and God's kingdom in this world. Let your love, and your conscience, and your will go out in one great controlling, absorbing purpose that Christ shall be magnified in your body, whether it be by life or by death.

V

An Incomparable Pardon

“Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy. He will turn again; He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which Thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.”—*Micah* vii. 18—20.

THIS is a little poem of twelve lines in the Hebrew. It is one of the most exquisite things to be found in the entire Old Testament, and would alone be sufficient to prove that this Bible is the Word of God, for there is nothing like it in all the literature of man. The opening sentence of this poem gives us a hint as to what is to follow. “Who a God like unto Thee?” If you will allow me I will give a little different translation of this poem, which will serve if you will put it alongside of the other, as a kind of a commentary upon it.

“Who a God like unto Thee?” That is the subject of the poem. And now the poem describes the wonders of this God, which leads the prophet Micah to exclaim, “Who is a God like unto Thee, who pardoneth iniquity, who passeth over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not for ever His holy anger, for

in mercy He delighteth. Upon us He will once more have compassion. Our iniquities He will subdue. And Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. He will perform to Jacob truth, to Abraham mercy, which to our fathers Thou hast sworn from the days of old."

Now, those of you who are accustomed to look most carefully into the structure of Scripture will observe another instance here, where ten particulars constitute completeness. This is an attempt on the part of an inspired writer to present at one complete view the marvels of God's forgiving grace; and he gives us ten statements following his opening exclamation, and these ten statements embrace a revelation of the pardoning grace of God, so wonderful that, as I have already said, this poem alone would suffice to show that no one could have written the description unless he was inspired of God. Look in all the sacred books of the ancients, in all the philosophies of religious teachers in India, and Persia, and China, and the isles of the sea. You will find nothing like this.

You will notice, if you compare closely verse with verse here, that we have four things brought out in a very remarkable degree. The whole poem is full of the fact of God's pardon, but there are three things that are added to the declaration of that fact. The first is the fulness of that pardon; the second is the freeness of that pardon; and the third is the faithfulness of that pardon.

As to the fact of this pardon. From ancient times God has gloried in the display of His mercy, as we may see in the Book of Exodus, where Moses said, "Show me, I beseech Thee, Thy glory," God said, "I will make all My goodness to pass before thee." And then he proclaimed the name of the Lord; and in ten particulars again he showed forth that the name was associated with the glory of forgiving grace—merciful, gracious, slow to

anger, long suffering, abundant in goodness, abundant in truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, sin, and yet, with all this, free from all guilt Himself, uncompromising with iniquity, or having any accomplice among sinners, or complicity with their sin. He proclaimed the name and the character of Jehovah in those ten things that all had to do with Him as a forgiving Jehovah.

Now let us look at the completeness of this pardon. "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity and passeth by" (or "passeth over") "the transgression of the remnant of His heritage?" We never find the words "passing over" in the Old Testament without at once being reminded of the Passover. Micah, no doubt, is referring to the Passover here. It is the same word in the original, and it unquestionably refers to that wonderful act of grace in which God, seeing the blood on the blood-stained doorposts, behind which the children of Israel were hiding when the angel of His wrath was commissioned to pass by, passed over the houses of the Israelites, and visited judgment upon the Egyptians; and so, when Micah is crying out, "Who is a God like unto Thee?" I have no doubt that he thought of that same expression that was used in the 15th chapter of Exodus at the 11th verse. When God had delivered Israel by this blood on the doorposts, and then had carried them across the Red Sea, and made them to escape from their enemies, in that wonderful song that Moses and the children of Israel sang, we find this same expression, "Who is like unto Thee?" It is the 11th verse of the 15th chapter. "Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods?" And so, when Micah cried out, "Who is a god like unto Thee?" he could not forget that at the shores of the Red Sea that same exclamation came from the lips of Moses and the children of Israel in that triumphant scene.

Now, how was the glory of God shown in forgiving grace at the time of the Passover? I have already said that the Passover was a token and an example of redemption by blood: the slain lamb, the hyssop steeped in the blood of the lamb, the blood sprinkled on the right-hand side and the upper side, and then the children of Israel gathering in their houses that were thus marked with the sign of the blood, and keeping the Passover while the angel of wrath passed over them.

But there is another reference to the Passover here, in this same poem of Micah, which I think is even more wonderful than that. "He will turn again; He will have compassion upon us." That is a second act of compassion. The first act of compassion was passing by the children of Israel on account of the blood; but there was another act of compassion, and another Passover. The first Passover was the angel passing over the houses of the Israelites; but the next Passover was the children of Israel passing over the Red Sea; and so to the whole book of Exodus that one word "Passover" is the key: God passing over His people, and His people passing over out of Egypt on their way to the promised land.

Now what happened in the second Passover, the passing over of the Red Sea? The Egyptians came up behind the children of Israel, to draw them back into their bondage and slavery. And after God had carried His people across, as on dry land, and the Egyptians essayed to follow them through this open path, with the wall of waters on each side, God told Moses to throw out his arm once more, with the rod of God in his hand, and the waters came back and overwhelmed the Egyptians, and drowned them in the depths of the sea, so that there was not one of them left.

Now see here. "Who is a God like unto Thee? In the first place, Thou dost pardon iniquity and pass over

the blood-stained houses of Thy believing people. But then Thou dost again turn and have compassion upon us. Thou dost subdue our iniquities and cast all our sins into the depths of the sea." Even after a man has found refuge in Jesus Christ, and after he has gone behind the blood-stained door, and has claimed mercy and grace from God because he takes' refuge in Christ, how often his sins come up behind him, his old habits, the remembrance of his past iniquities, and they try to drag him back into the old bondage of slavery; and then God has a second act of compassion ready for the poor sinner. He drowns his sins in the depths of the sea; He subdues his iniquity. As once He justified him by faith, so now He sanctifies him by faith. As once He took away the penalty of sin when the angel of wrath would have destroyed him, so now He takes away the power of sin, and subdues iniquity, and casts sin into the depths of the sea, just as the Egyptians were drowned before the very eyes of the children of Israel. Do you not see how Micah, writing this sublime poem, calls up the story of the children of Israel, and makes it a lesson for all ages for poor sinners that need a Saviour—first, from the penalty of sin, second, from the power of sin, and, third, from the presence of sin? And God will not give up the work until He has not only destroyed the power of your old sins, but has banished the very presence of it from you and made you fully and completely redeemed.

And now there is another thought here. There is not only the fact of pardon and the fulness of pardon, which is followed even by purification, but there is the thought of freeness. When we talk of free pardon, we mean a pardon that cannot be bought, and for which we have nothing to do in order to obtain it; something that is an absolutely free and gracious gift. Now, freeness has to do with large resources. Suppose, for

instance, that there was a famine in a city, and I were a man of wealth and generosity, and were trying to relieve the famine. If I had but a comparatively small amount of wealth, then, in distributing to distressed people, my money would soon be exhausted. But suppose that I had the riches of royalty at the back of me, millions and millions and millions of pounds sterling. Then I could give freely, since I could not exhaust myself. Now, the wonder about God is that He is so full of grace that He can give as much as He wills, and as much as the sinner needs, and He has got just as much as He had before He began to give. It is inexhaustible. Why, you might sooner exhaust the light of the sun that has shone for countless years on this planet, and which is just as bright and just as warm as ever. You might easier exhaust the resources of the sun than exhaust the resources of God. I think that we are taught this here.

Why does He forgive? Because of anything in you? Not at all. Because there is any constraint or compulsion? Not at all. The only reason why God forgives is because He delights to forgive. This is a great truth, is it not? "We love Him because He first loved us." He loved us first. "God commends His love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." God commends His love to us in that, while we were yet enemies, we were reconciled to Him by the death of His Son. So freely does He love that He loves without regard to our deserts. So freely does He love that He loves without regard to our loving Him. He loves us when we hate Him; He loves us when we are sinners; He loves us when we are depraved and reject the very love that He offers us. He forgives like a God. But there never was another God of whom men knew, or thought that they knew, that had any such grace as this. It is free because He delights. When you do a thing

out of delight, you do it, as we say, spontaneously. It is like the gushing forth of a spring that must relieve its own fulness. The only reason why a spring flows out is because it is full. That is the only reason. It is not because you make a channel for it. It will make its own channel. It is not because you need to have your wants supplied. The spring must flow because it has a want of its own. Its want is a vent, a channel, room to flow. God loves because He must love. He forgives because He delights in mercy. And that is what makes the love of God and the forgiveness of sin so free, and it is one reason why it is so full. Because He delights in mercy He glories in forgiveness, in reconciling, in restoring.

Now I want to pass to something which is not quite so plain. The faithfulness of God is here taught us. Have you ever noticed the two words that are used here? You know that we are in an age when there is a great deal of controversy as to whether the words of Holy Scripture, as well as the thoughts of Holy Scripture, are directed of God. I have not any more doubt of it than I have of my own existence, but there are people who are affected by the atmosphere of unbelief that is surrounding us; and I want to strengthen even the weak faith of God's disciples. And I want to call your attention here once more to the evident care that has been taken by the Spirit with the words used. You notice, "Thou wilt perform truth to Jacob, and mercy to Abraham." Now, why was it not "mercy to Abraham," and "mercy to Jacob"? There is some reason why the word is "mercy" as applied to Abraham. I think I can show that very easily, although it is a new thought to me, a new discovery to me. When God appeared to Abraham, and said, "I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee, in all their generations, for an everlasting covenant," it was pure and simple mercy, was it not? Abraham had no claim

on God for such great favour as was shown him. God, simply because He delighted in mercy, because He wanted to do a good thing and a kindness to Abraham, made a covenant with Abraham. But observe that, just the moment that God had made that covenant, then it became not only a matter of mercy to keep His covenant, but a matter of truth. After He had given His promise, after He had pledged His word, then God (I may say it reverently) had no choice. His word had gone forth, and that was the end of it. What was mercy to Abraham became truth to Jacob. When God said to Abraham, "I will do good to thee and thy seed after thee," Jacob could claim that promise that God had spoken to Abraham, and could say, "Lord, I rely not only on Thy grace, as Abraham did, but on Thy truth, for Thou hast spoken this word, and Thy word can never fail"; and, just as every Bible student does, I keep gathering on every page of the Word of God new proof every day that God oversaw the very language in which His grace was proclaimed to the children of men.

I want to make this plain to you—that what was mercy to Abraham was truth to Jacob; that what was mercy to the first sinner becomes truth to you who take God at His word and claim the promises. I think that it is in the life of the Earl of Shaftesbury—I am not quite sure—that there is a beautiful story about a great Englishman—I am not sure that it was not Lord Palmerston. At any rate, it was a man high in the confidence of the public, and in an official position, who was going along on one of the outskirts of London one day, and just as he was passing over a bridge there was a little girl that was going along with a vessel—I think it was a pitcher—in which she had, perhaps, a quart of milk, and she stumbled and fell, and spilt the milk and broke the pitcher, and the little creature was in great trouble. She

was afraid that when she got home she would not get a very good welcome, and that she might be punished, as a great many children are punished for accidents by an impatient mother. She began to cry bitterly, and this gentleman of high position went up to her and said, "My dear, don't cry; don't cry. I have not any change with me now, but I will meet you here to-morrow at twelve o'clock on this bridge, and I will give you a shilling to buy another pitcher with and some more milk." He went on to his business or his calling. The next day he was in a large company of gentlemen called on special business, and the hour approached in which he had promised to meet that little girl, and he said, "Gentlemen, I have an engagement." "Oh, but there is important business going on, sir." "I cannot help it. I have a previous engagement made yesterday. I must go and take care of the engagement." And he went, punctual to the minute, with the shilling ready, and found the little girl there, tears dried, confident that the gentleman who had said that he would meet her would be there with his shilling. So he sent the little girl away to her home with money to get another pitcher and replace the lost milk.

Now, when he made that promise, it was simply grace, was it not? But, after he had made it, it was truth. He was bound to do what he had said. He would have had no right to awaken an expectation that he would not fulfil, and he felt himself bound in honour to do what he had said, though there was no obligation in the first instance for him to make the promise. So, when Abraham broke his pitcher and spilt his milk—when Abraham had lost all claim on God through his sin, and his character was shattered, and there was no hope for him in himself, the gracious God met him in the way, and said, "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after

thee, in all their generations, for an everlasting covenant." There was no claim on God to replace the shattered character, but, when God had said that, then He was bound, and what was, in the first place, mercy became, in the second place, truth.

And I am glad to say that one Testament illustrates another. If you turn to the 1st Epistle of John, first chapter, ninth verse, you will read these remarkable words: "If we confess our sin He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." What remarkable words. Talk about "faithfulness" and "justice" in forgiving sin? Why, it is the faithfulness of God and the justice of God that makes the sinner afraid. That is what makes the sinner troubled at His presence, because God has said, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die"—because God has said, "I am a just God, and will by no means clear the guilty." And so the trembling sinner comes before a faithful God and a just God, and he says, "How shall I meet with God in peace?" But now, when God has said that if you confess your sins and forsake your sins, you shall find mercy, the same faithfulness which, before He promised that grace, might have compelled the loss of your soul, and the same justice which, before He made that promise, imperilled your own welfare, are arrayed on your side, for God has said that, if you confess and forsake your sin, you shall find forgiveness, and His faithfulness to His word compels Him to forgive, and His sense of justice and righteousness compels Him to be true to the expectation of a believing soul.

The same thing is taught in another form in that same epistle, the 1st Epistle of John: "If any man believe not God, he hath made Him a liar." See how God stimulates the weak faith of His children, and see how He encourages the penitent and trembling sinner to trust. "Why,"

He says, "so far from its being a humility that pleases men when you doubt My word and My forgiving grace, you are really making Me a liar." But God challenges you, as though He wanted you to be jealous for His truth. God challenges you to believe that He will forgive your sin, if you confess it and forsake it, because, if you do not believe it, you are casting doubt on the truthfulness of God. And I repeat, I do not think that, in the whole Bible from the first chapter of Genesis to the last chapter of Revelation, we have got so marvellous a picture of the forgiving grace of God as we have got in this little poem of twelve lines from the prophet Micah. The fact of pardon, the fulness of pardon, that not only passes over transgression, but subdues transgression, and casts our sins into the depths of the seas, where they no longer can come up to trouble us, and drag us back to old habits; and not only so, but there is a freeness that is only possible to one that delights to forgive and pardon; and, not only so, but a faithfulness that makes it necessary that God should forgive, because He has once said that He would forgive, and makes the very mercy of God now join hands with truth for the reclamation and restoration of the sinner. "Mercy and truth are met together. Righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

Well, but some of you, perhaps, think, "If God is so forgiving, why does not He forgive me out and out, without my confessing my sin and forsaking my sin? If God is so very gracious that He delights in mercy, why are there any conditions to mercy? Why does He not just proclaim an amnesty of full and free and absolute pardon of the rebellious subjects of His government, instead of commanding me to repent of my sin and forsake my sin in order to find mercy?" Why, it is not safe for God to forgive an unrepenting sinner. Do you

know that pardon is not always a good thing? Pardon may set a premium on crime. Pardon may help to make criminals and to encourage criminals. There is a fine illustration of this in America. Some years ago, down in Frankfort, Kentucky, there was a man that had killed another man in a fit of passion, and, although he was not sentenced to the gallows, he was sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. There was an old schoolmate of his that had shown great bravery in rescuing from a wreck some twenty persons, and the legislature of Kentucky were so much in admiration of his heroism that they passed a resolution of thanks to this man as an example of remarkable heroism, and he took advantage of this fact to go to the governor, and say that there was a disposition to show a sort of recognition of what he had done in rescuing many other people: would not the governor grant a pardon to that old schoolmate of his, who, in a moment of passion, had struck down a fellow human being? And the Government was pleased to grant the pardon, and gave the man the work of taking the pardon and announcing it to his old friend who was held in the cell as guilty of murder. When he went there, he said nothing about having the pardon, but he turned to his friend, and said, "Now, John, suppose you should get out of the prison, what would be the first thing you would do?" "I would shoot the chief witness against me in my trial, and then I would go and shoot the judge that sentenced me." And the man, with a sorrowful heart, turned round and took the pardon back to the governor, and said, "I could not deliver the pardon to that man." It would have been an iniquity if he had given the pardon to that man. The man was not in a fit state to be pardoned. He had not the preparation for the reception of pardon, and the proper use of pardon.

Now, God says to you that He is infinitely ready to forgive, but there are some conditions in you which make it possible that you shall receive the pardon and make a proper use of the pardon, and the conditions are very simple—that if you confess and forsake sin, you shall find mercy. He does not ask you to make reparation for it. You can make no reparation to Him, though you may possibly make some restitution to men that you have wronged. He does not ask you to do anything to expiate your sin. He does not ask you to keep up righteous acts of self-denial, in order to make forgiveness possible; but He asks you to take a position as a guilty sinner, and say, “Lord, I have sinned against heaven, and in Thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son.” He does ask you that you will turn away from the fact of your iniquity, and show a disposition henceforth to obey the God that you have wronged, and whom, if it were possible, you would have ruined. There is no lack of forgiving grace in God; but He cannot be an accomplice of your sin, and He cannot set a premium on your iniquity.

I would say to you in the name of God, I do not care what your sin is; I do not care how deep its dye; I do not care how long continued it has been; if you will humbly and penitently confess your sin, and, by the grace of God, resolutely foresake it, you shall find all that this passage of Scripture means. He will pardon your iniquity; He will pass over your transgression; He will subdue your sins; He will put them in the depths of the sea; and He will show Himself a faithful and a just God in performing as truth to you what, to the first sinner, was simply mercy.

Now, is it not wonderful how in this precious Bible we find sin and salvation side by side? You will remember how in the West Indies there is a poisonous tree,

that has a fruit something like a golden pippin, but which is so very poisonous that the very juice when it falls on the skin blisters it. You will never find in the West Indies this poisonous tree but you will find close by it a white wood tree, or a fig tree, the sap of which has such remarkable power that, if applied immediately over the sap that comes on the human body from the tree in question, it would completely antidote the poison. And so here is the awful tree of human sin. You will find no protection in this wicked world and in your own heart, but, close by the fruit of the tree that brings fall and disaster, there is the cross of Jesus Christ, and the precious blood shed on that tree of curse is the perfect antidote for all the poison and disaster of sin. Who of you will come to Jesus Christ and receive full and free pardon, confessing your sin, forsaking your sin, and finding God, than whom there can be none greater, and like unto whom there is none other?

VI

An Impossible Discrimination

“For there is no difference.”—*Rom. iii. 22.*

IF there is any text in the Bible against which unbelieving souls fight, it is this text. They say, “There is a difference. There is a difference between myself and an outrageous criminal. I am a respectable man and a citizen. I am a kind husband and a father, and a good neighbour, and an honest man. Now, it is manifest that there is a difference between me and the rascal, the scamp, the curse to society, that has to be locked up in a cell, or swung off the gallows because society must get rid of him as a common nuisance.” But it must be noticed that the Bible does not dispute that there is a difference in these respects between men. In fact, the Bible concedes the difference when our Lord says in the twelfth chapter of Luke that he that knew his Lord’s will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that did things contrary to his Master’s will, not knowing that will—that is, not having a revelation of it—shall be beaten with few stripes. You will observe that our Lord Himself concedes two things, first, that there is a difference in quality, and, secondly, that there is a difference in punishment.

Sin is not always as flagrant and as outrageous in one man as in another man, or in the same man at the different times of his life, and under different forms of provocation and temptation. And, again, our Lord concedes this

difference when He says of the Pharisees and the Scribes, that are hypocrites, that, knowing what their duty is, do it not, and, having the key of knowledge, not only enter not in themselves, but suffer not those that would enter to have access to knowledge, that they shall receive the greater damnation. So there is not only a difference in the degrees of sin and of guilt, but there are different steps in hell. There is a less damnation and a greater damnation, so that the antagonism which the sinner has to the doctrine which he supposes to be here taught is a mistaken antagonism. God never said that all men were sinners alike, but He says that all men were alike sinners; and there is a great deal of difference between those two statements. All men do not sin in the same form and with the same degree of guilt and aggravation and exposure to poverty; but there is no difference in this fact, that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. The fact of sin, the fact of guilt, the fact of condemnation, is a universal fact, and there is no difference between men as to the fact of sin, and guilt, and penalty, and wrath.

Now, while all this is true, there is a deeper truth here than this, and that truth I would seek to emphasise. While the Bible does not deny that there is a difference between men in the degrees of their guiltiness and in the degrees of their condemnation, let us observe that the difference is not so great as men commonly think, nor is the difference owing, as men often think, so much to what is in themselves as to the restraints by which God surrounds one and withholds him from sin.

I believe that there can be no great salvation that does not reach a great sin, and that there can be no great consciousness of what Christ is to the soul unless there be first a great consciousness of what the soul is in its extreme need of Christ; and because, perhaps, in these

days there is a tendency to refine away the guilt of sin, to make sin a misfortune, a kind of fall forward, a kind of necessity to moral progress—a tendency to talk of sin as a kind of moral disease that therefore ought to be treated with compassion and forbearance, I believe that it is necessary to bring before men something with regard to the guiltiness of sin, and that we should be able to get them away from looking at sin as a mere misfortune, and compel them to face the fact that sin implies voluntary departure from God, voluntary rebellion against God, and a voluntary attempt, as far as the sinner goes, to cast down God from the throne of His excellence.

Prolonged meditation on this point has satisfied my own mind—and I believe would satisfy any candid mind—that the differences that men see in sinners are not, after all, as great as they often appear. Let us try to get some conception of what it is in which the extreme guilt of sin consists.

Now, what is sin? I think that you will agree with me that it has been very well defined in the Confession of Faith which declares that sin is not only a transgression of the law of God, but is any want of conformity unto the will of God. That definition is really drawn from the Holy Scriptures. James tells us that sin is a transgression of the law, but we are told in this very text that it is sin to come short of the glory of God; either to walk over God's law, disregarding its limits, or to be careless of the fulfilment of the law as a rule of duty. Those are two sorts or aspects of sin.

Whenever a man sins, no matter how small the sin is in his own sight, or how insignificant the sin may be in the sight of his fellow-men, he breaks the whole law because of the unity of the law. Have you ever noticed that expression of our Lord when He was asked to give

the great commandment of the law? He said, "The great commandment of the law is this. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Now, what did Christ mean by saying that the second commandment was like unto the first? Just what I mean if I say that the left hand is like unto the right, or that the left eye is like unto the right eye, or the left ear like unto the right ear. These two hands are manifestly meant to go together on one body, and to work together in one trade, to handle together the same implements, and, by their united action, to accomplish a common result. The two eyes are placed in the head in order to perfect vision. If I had but one eye my vision would be imperfect. I command objects on my right side with the right eye, and on the left side with the left eye. I command sounds with the right ear on the right side, and with the left ear on the left side, and, therefore, without either of these members on either side of the body, my body is imperfect—my vision or my hearing, whatever it may be, without its opposite and corresponding members.

Now, these two laws of God, summed up by Christ in this fashion, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," and "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," are like, just as the hands, the eyes, the ears are like. They stand over against each other. One is the right hand of the law, and the other is its left hand. One is the right eye of the law, and the other is the left eye, and without either of these laws you have not a perfect law. It is like a defective vision. It is like an imperfect body. It is like something in which the completeness is sacrificed by a serious and fatal lack. Not only does He mean

that the two laws are alike in this, that the ruling word of both is love, and that the object in both is outside of one's self, but He means that they are like in this which I have already intimated: they belong together as parts of one absolutely perfect law, and you can no more have a perfect law without both of them than you can have a perfect sphere with only a half sphere; and, if we had the wisdom and the knowledge and the understanding to trace them, we could begin at the first commandment, and we could tell what must come in the other nine of them from the substance of the first.

I desire particularly to get this thought imbedded in your minds, in your deepest convictions and persuasions—that the law is a unit, and therefore that a sin, however small, because it assaults the law, assaults the law as a unit. Whenever a man breaks one commandment he breaks the whole law, because the law is not cut up into a dozen laws, but it consists of one great code in which each particular commandment is a single aspect or feature of the code. You turn the great sphere round, and there strikes your eye a portion or segment of the sphere. That is one law. You turn it a little further, and there is another segment. That is another law. You turn it a little further, and there is another, and that is another law. So each law constitutes a part and portion of one perfect sphere that could not be perfect without each law.

Now, suppose we advance a step further. Sin not only breaks the law as a unit, but sin disputes the authority that lies back of the law. The authority is one authority. See what James says: "He that in one point offends is guilty of all." Why? "For He that said, 'Do not commit adultery,' says also, 'Do not kill.'" If, therefore, thou commit one of these sins and not the other, thou art still disregarding the authority that lies back of both commands.

What does that mean? What is obedience? Obedience is submission to authority. I obey, not when I do that which is commanded, but when I do that which is commanded for the sake of the authority of Him that commanded it. Look in our families. Suppose that here is a law of the family. A person in this house is ill, and it is necessary that there should be no disturbance of the nervous system of the sick patient, and so the father says to his children, "I want you whenever you come into this house from your school not to make a noise unnecessarily, not to run up and down these stairs, or through these halls, not to fling your books down in a careless way, and to make no unnecessary noise, lest you disturb the sick one, who is very sensitive to every sound and noise that is unnecessary." Now, suppose the child comes into the house under these circumstances, and goes softly through the house without the slightest thought or regard to the authority of the father. There is no obedience there. There is the accidental conformity, but there is no obedience. But suppose, on the other hand, the child comes in and thinks of the father's words, and guides all the motions that are made after entering the door and in entering the door on account of what has been spoken of the father. That is obedience. We often think that a conformity to law is obedience. Not so. A conformity to a law is only obedience when I conform for the sake of Him that said, "Thou shalt do this," or "Thou shalt not do that." That is to say, obedience is submitting my will to the will of one that has the right and the authority to command.

Now, sin consists in this, not simply that I break a law, but that I break the authority of the law-giver. God says, "Thou shalt not," and I do it. What is that but my will saying, "I shall"? God says, "Thou shalt," and I do it not. What is that

but my will saying "I shall not"? And what does that mean? Why, the significance of that offence does not consist in the fact that it is a wrong thing, but it consists in the fact that I bring my will into conflict with the will of God, and fling myself on the bosses of Jehovah's buckler. And the moment that we see this, that moment shall we see that what we call the littleness or the greatness of a sin has nothing to do with it—nothing to do with it. The question is, "Have I regarded the sacredness of God's authority?" If the sacredness of that authority could be represented by a piece of delicate porcelain, sacred because God made it, sacred because He values it, sacred because it represents Him, do you not think that it is as flagrant an attack on the sacredness of God if I break off a small corner from that porcelain pattern, as if I dash it into fragments? Is it not the same disregard of sacredness? Is it not the same disregard of the divine? Is it not the same disregard of that which God values if I dash a corner off that authority as if I dash the authority into pieces at its very centre?

I do not know why this should not appear plain to other men. It is as plain to me as it can possibly be. What God resents in sin is not the fact that it is a big sin as men call it, or a little sin as men call it, but that the sinner strikes at God. And do you not see that if sin is a breaking of law and a breaking of authority, the principle by which the man commits the smallest sin is the same principle by which he commits the biggest sin. Do you not see that any sin is a breaking of law and a disputing of authority with God, and all you have to do is to give a sinner adequate temptation to commit a big sin, adequate opportunity to commit a big sin, adequate provocation to commit a big sin, and adequate time to become a sufficiently daring sinner to commit a big sin, and there

is not a sin from the bottom to the top of the whole round of transgressions which that man would not commit.

Now, again, the difference between sin and sin is far less than we are apt to think, because sin, after all, is only a germ. Have you ever noticed that the Bible treats "sin" in the singular, different from "sins" in the plural? Sin in the singular represents the root; sins in the plural represent the fruits that grow out of that root. Which is the more important, the sins or the sin? Which is the more important, the fruits or the root? Which makes the fruit possible? Now, what I think that the Bible teaches everywhere from beginning to end about sin is that God cares very little about the fruit that grows on the bough, but what He specially cares for is the root which makes that bough possible and the fruits on it possible. That is to say, you may pluck the fruit from that bough, but it will bring forth others. But, if you can get that root out of the soul, you destroy sin altogether. And so the grace of God strikes, not at the boughs with their fruit first, but at the roots first of all. Reformation begins with the boughs, and never gets to the root at all. Reformation plucks the apples of Sodom off the boughs of the tree of evil, and thinks the man is better because there are not so many fruits on the tree. But regeneration begins in the heart, and strikes at the root which makes sin possible.

If you go down to the valley of the Nile, and find the crocodile eggs, and crush the eggs, you have crushed as many crocodiles as you have crushed eggs. If you in your travels through the country burst an acorn, and make it impossible that it shall sprout, the oak is crushed in the acorn. And sin is so terrible because it is the egg out of which the crocodile comes, and if you can crush the egg you have crushed the crocodile; and if the egg remains, the germ of the crocodile

is in the crocodile's eggs. That is to say, the thing that is terrible about sin is that sin is that from which can spring in time every possible form of transgression, or outrage, or rebellion against Almighty God.

I think that if we properly take in these great truths we shall understand some of the things that are very mysterious to us otherwise. We shall understand how it is that God judges differently from the way in which man judges. Suppose, for instance, that here is a dying thief on the cross. He has lived an abominable life. He has been an outrager of property. He has, perhaps, been a murderer as well as a robber. He looks to Christ in the dying hour, and he says, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom"; and Jesus says, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." And yet here is a man that dies like the rich man of whom we read in the sixteenth of Luke, and I want you to notice that there is not a single word said against him in the sixteenth chapter of Luke in the way of charging him with inhumanity. In all the pictures that have been drawn of the rich man, there have been a great many colours put in that were not put in by the Holy Spirit. He has been represented as allowing Lazarus to lie at his gate and cry in vain for the crumbs that fell from his table; but the Bible does not say that Lazarus cried in vain. We have been taught sometimes to think of the rich man as though the dogs were more compassionate than he; but the Bible does not say so. We are not told in the Bible that Lazarus ever appealed for help without being abundantly fed. We are not told that the rich man was so mean, and so avaricious, and so selfish that he looked on the calamities and misfortunes of his neighbours without any response. Why, he might have been a first-class giver, and his name might have been at the very top of the list of the people who

gave benevolently in the district in which he dwelt. Nobody knows. The only thing that is charged against the rich man is that in his lifetime he was content to have his good things; that, as he was a worldly man, he thought a great deal of this world; he sought his pleasures and his treasures here rather than in the love of God. And he did not give proper heed to the testimony of the Bible concerning things to come. That was the sole crime of the rich man, so far as the Bible account goes.

Now, a man may say, "It is a very strange doctrine that you preach, that a dying thief, an abominable sinner, a criminal, in one hour shall repent, that he shall go into heaven and be with Christ in Paradise; and the man against whom no crime could be charged, and who spent his life industriously, and accumulated a fortune, and spent it in a proper way, and even gave to his neighbours, and had compassion on those that were round about him, should go down to hell." Well, let us look at it a moment. Why did the dying thief go to heaven, and why did that rich man go to hell? Do you suppose that in God's eye those two men stood as they appear to stand in the eyes of men, one an abominable criminal and an outrageous criminal, and the other a respectable citizen, a man of industry, and a man of capacity, and a man of intelligence, and a man of benevolence, as the world calls benevolence? Do you suppose that that is God's judgment of those two men?

Suppose I stand at the top of some stairs, and I am going down, and there is a poor wretch that stands at the bottom of the stairs, and he is coming up. Now, I am twenty steps, perhaps, above him. He comes up, and I go down. Which stands at the bottom by and by, and which stands at the top? God sees the Pharisee at the top of the stairs going down; God sees the

publican at the bottom of the stairs going up; and God sees those two men, not as they are when going up, but as they will be when they get through. Life is an inclined plane. The poor penitent sinner at the bottom that cannot so much as lift his eyes to heaven, but sees his guilt and owns his sin, and knows his hell-desert, and cries to God to meet him at the mercy-seat, is on the way up. The Pharisee and hypocrite stands at the top in the social level, and in knowledge and apparent morality and outward good works, but he is going to the bottom; and in the eyes of Him to whom the whole future is unveiled the man that is at the bottom of the stairs now stands on the top, and the man that is near the top of the stairs stands at the bottom.

You are aware that this is a very difficult subject to present, and I feel its difficulty, but I believe that I have a scriptural basis for what I am saying here. When you get up to the sun and look back to the earth, the inequalities on the surface of the earth disappear. Why, we are told by men that have studied the subject that the highest mountains on the earth, even the Himalaya range and others like them, if seen from a distance above the earth sufficiently great would appear no larger than the inequalities in the surface of the rind of an orange. When you come to see the whole globe and take in its proportions, those differences and distances which strike us as so great on this human level appear to be absolutely insignificant. And when God looks down on human society, when He sees the difference, for instance, in two different men, when He measures all the circumstances amid which these men have been born and have been brought up, when He measures the strength of temptation over one man, and the weakness of that form of temptation over another, God measures not as man measures, and sees not as man sees. He is looking at

what in that sinner may be developed by grace into the saint, and He sees what, in the nominal Pharisee, is the gem of iniquity, and depravity, and rebellion, and what would develop, under proper circumstances and favourable circumstances, into the flagrant transgressor.

I will not pursue this subject much further, but I beg you to notice one or two things. I have said already that the difference between men in the point of guilt and of outward transgression does not depend upon themselves so much as upon God. Now, we are sensible people and intelligent people that are looking at this subject, and let me ask you a question. Do not you know that there are some people that are born into this world with more depraved appetities, and more depraved tastes, and more depraved inclinations than other men? Here is a child down in the East of London that is the great grandchild of criminals, and paupers, and drunkards. There has never been a chance for virtuous blood to find its way into the veins of that child. Born of such an ancestry, and bred in the midst of the surroundings of crime, profanity, and blasphemy, with poor food and poor clothing, and with no moral teaching, with not even any intellectual instruction to uplift the mind, with no suggestions of a higher and nobler kind, except those that come from an almost strangled conscience—that moral sense which is implanted by God in the least and lowest of His human creatures—that child grows up amid all circumstances that are calculated to develop crime. You enjoy the blessing of a virtuous home. Your mother is a godly woman; your father is a godly man; your grandfather and grandmother before them were godly people. There is a family Bible in the house, and there is a family altar there, where daily prayer is offered. You never sit down to your table without grace being said over meat, and you never

rise on the Lord's day morning without being reminded that it is a day of sacred rest, when worship and work for God are alone proper and possible to him that regards the restrictions of the day.

Now, I would like to ask you what comparison is there between you and that poor little wandering waif of whom I have spoken? By birth, by blood, by training, by breeding, all the influences that have surrounded you from the beginning have been a thousand-fold more calculated to uplift you into a high level both of intellectual and of moral, as well as spiritual, life. Now, does not God take that into consideration when He measures your life over against the other life? Does not He take all that into consideration when He measures your penalty over against the penalty of that other soul, in case you both die in sin and without Jesus Christ? Why, it would not be possible for God to be a just and merciful God if all those things were not considered in the making up of His final judgment. How absurd it is for you to pride yourselves upon an externally better life, when the fact is that you owe that better life to the circumstances under which, by the good providence of God, you were born and bred.

Then do not think of your outer life as though that constituted the whole matter before God. In fact, with God it is very little in comparison with the inward motive. Go and read the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of the Gospel of Matthew, the Sermon on the Mount, and see with what strange and marvellous skill our Lord tears away the veil and shows the motive. Who is the murderer? Not the man that strikes his brother a fatal blow, but the man whose hatred towards his brother would make the murderous blow possible under circumstances of peculiar temptation and provocation. Who is the adulterer? Not the man who is guilty of the external

act of sin, but the man who looks on a woman to lust after her. Who is the man that takes God's holy name in vain? Not the man that swears and blasphemes simply, but the man who thinks profanely of God, and sets His word lightly by him, or inwardly defies God's authority. That is the only way for God to judge character; and really it is the only just way for anybody to judge character, if it were possible for us to penetrate to the hidden motives.

I remember in Wisconsin, near to what was my own home for many years in America, there is a kind of moss that grows over the trees. It is a beautiful light moss that grows in long trailing ribbons on trees. It grows about the trunks of trees, and grows with great rapidity until it covers the entire trunk of the tree and runs out on the branches, to their furthest twig. It droops in all directions about the tree, like green ringlets from the tree's head. But that moss is a parasite. It feeds on the life of the tree, and when it has covered the tree with its deceptive beauty the tree is dead, and presently the parasite dies, as well as the tree on which it has fed. There is a great deal of external life in this world that is like the moss of the Wisconsin forest. It covers life with apparent lines of grace and seeming beauty, but it feeds on the life it surrounds and adorns, and the life and the moss die together. There is a good deal of so-called "culture" in this world that is just such a moss, and there is a good deal of external worship in this world which is just such a moss.

"Oh," but you say, "it is a very strange thing that God should consign to hell people of all grades of sin, from the man that has been externally moral, but inwardly rebellious against God, to the worst criminal that commits every sin which the Decalogue forbids." Did it ever occur to you that God could do nothing else

with incorrigible sinners but consign them to perdition? I believe that, when the great secrets of eternity are opened up, we shall find that God—may I reverently say it?—had no alternative. I remember in America on one occasion that an evangelist who, like myself, has always sought to speak true words on this great doctrine of Holy Scripture, told, in his sermon, what the Word of God said about the fatal guilt of sin. He had quoted, as I often have done, the seven deadly sins that Rome puts in her list. Now, Rome has taught a great deal of error, but there is a great deal of sense and sound scriptural teaching in her list of the seven deadly sins. What are they? I give them here in their order: pride, idleness, envy, murder, covetousness, lust, gluttony. You do not wonder that murder should be put among the deadly sins, but that pride seems so much less guilty, idleness, envy, greed, gluttony, should be put on a level with lust and murder—that seems at first unjust. But there may be some men that are as great sinners in being envious as other men are in being murderous. There are some men that go as far to assault the authority of God in the indulgence of a wicked pride, as other men do in the indulgence of a sinful lust; and the question is, What is deadly sin? Deadly sin is sin that brings death, and all sin is deadly because all sin brings death.

But, as I was saying, this evangelist was teaching this doctrine of the universal loss of sinners without Christ, and a man who was present, who was a large manufacturer of glass, took him to task. "Why," he said, "my dear sir, it seems to me that you are preaching nonsense. You are preaching that I, who do not pretend to be a Christian man, nothing but a moral man, at any rate, am to be consigned, if I do not believe in Christ and repent of my sin, to the same perdition with the man that was hanged last week for murder." "Well," said my

friend, "I have not said that you would be sent to as deep a damnation as he, sir, but I have dared to say that you would, like him, be a lost man if you did not accept the sinner's only refuge." "Well," he said, "I think that is nonsense. Why, the idea of God casting away all men into perdition without respect to the differences in those men's characters, or guilt, or sin." "Well," said my friend, "I did not say that. I did not say that He would have no respect to the differences in character, and guilt, and sin, but I did say that He would cast them all into perdition if they do not take refuge in Christ."

Well, the conversation passed, and other subjects were taken up. But a few days after, this merchant and manufacturer invited the evangelist out to see his glass works, and the manufacturer showed him one particular part of the business that he explained in full, and that was the way in which the various delicate articles were made of flint glass. "Now," said he, "for the construction of articles in flint glass we have to have vessels made that are peculiarly delicate. They are made of a peculiar clay that is quite costly, and the earthen vessel in which the liquid glass is carried to the tables or moulds must be absolutely without a flaw." And he took up one of these vessels made of clay, and baked into great hardness, and he showed him how, in every part of it, it was absolutely sound. "Why," said he, "if there is the slightest flaw or crack in this vessel it is useless"; and thereupon he took him out back of the works and showed him a large pile of these broken vessels. There were some of them that had nothing but a little flaw or crack. There were others that were cleft in twain. There were others that were broken to pieces. "Now," said he, "you see that I have to throw them all away, although some of them are very much less broken

than others." And my friend the evangelist turned upon him and said, "After all, sir, I think you are very much in this respect like Almighty God. You throw away a vessel that you cannot make any use of; and sin makes a human vessel useless to Almighty God, and therefore," he said, "if you, whom sin has ruined, take no refuge in Christ, and avail yourself not of the only power than can make that vessel pure, and whole, and strong, and meet for the Master's use, you shall be cast into the same perdition with him who has outwardly broken every command of the Decalogue."

I want you to notice that there are just two other cases in which this phrase, "There is no difference," is found in the New Testament. One is in the tenth chapter of Romans, and the other is the fifteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. The same apostle who says in this third chapter, "There is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," says in the tenth of Romans, "There is no difference, for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him." And in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, the only other case in which the same phrase is used, Peter says, "God put no difference between us and them"—that is, the Jews and the Gentiles—"purifying their hearts by faith." Oh, blessed be God, there is more than one sense in which there is no difference. If there is no difference in human sin, and human guilt, and condemnation as a fact, and all men go into perdition without Christ, there is no difference in a gracious God who is Lord over all, and who will extend His saving mercy to all that call upon Him in repentance and faith in His dear Son; and He who purifies the hearts of ancient saints and modern believers will purify your hearts by the same faith, and by the operation of the same grace, if you will come unto Him and in Jesus Christ be saved,

VII

The Soul's Mathematics

“For what is a man advantaged if he gain the whole world and lose himself, or be cast away.”—*Luke ix. 25.*

“For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ?”—*Matthew xvi. 26.*

THE comparison of these two passages is very helpful, and I submit to you that it is the most awful question that ever God asked of a human soul. It is the question of profit and loss. “What is a man advantaged”—“what shall it profit a man”—“if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul”—that is, “lose himself”—“or be cast away”; and “if a man shall lose his soul, what shall he give in exchange” for it to buy it back?

Four great thoughts the question suggests. The first is the nature of the soul; the second is the peril of the soul; the third is the value of the soul; and the fourth is the barter of the soul.

I.

First, the nature of the soul. Comparing these two passages in Matthew and in Luke, we learn this great and solemn thing, that a man's soul is a man's self. Matthew says, “Lose his own soul.” Luke says, “Lose his own self,” which proves that the soul is the self.

When God made man He made his body out of the dust of the ground, but when He came to make the man in his completeness He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man thus became a living soul, which shows that the living soul is what constitutes in God's eyes the main part of the man. The body is nothing but like the frame, and the soul like the picture. The body is like the setting, and the soul is like the gem. The body is like the house, and the soul is like the inhabitant. The soul is the true self. You put the soul in the body: the body does not move the soul, but the soul moves the body. The body may be deformed and homely, but it does not affect the soul. Out of a deformed body there may go up to God in the hour of death a soul that has been transformed in God's image, which is as pure and beautiful as an angel. A deformed body cannot deform a soul, but a deformed soul can deform a beautiful body. The soul in the body shines through the eye and speaks through the features, and the features and the form are largely affected by the soul, because the soul is the man, and the character of the soul more or less affects even the bodily features.

II.

So having learned what the nature of the soul is, and that it constitutes a man's true self, look for a moment at the second thought suggested here, namely, the peril of the soul. In the former question we can see that the world and the soul are treated here as though they were eternal foes. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Here it is taken for granted that the world gained means the soul lost. And it is true. The world and the soul are foes to each other. James says in the fourth chapter, "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore, will be the friend of this world is

the enemy of God." And John says in the 1st Epistle, 2nd chapter, 15th verse: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him; for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world; and the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Now, these are only two of the passages of Scripture which might be multiplied indefinitely to show that in God's eyes the world and the soul are opposed to each other, so that to gain the world is to lose the soul, and to gain the soul is to lose the world.

What is the thought? Selfishness is the root of sin, and all forms of self-indulgence tend to feed and fatten our selfish desires. It is a harmful thing for a man simply to say to himself, "I will have what I want." The mere habit of gratifying a selfish desire leaves its impress on the man's nature. I think we may put it more boldly than this—that an increase of our possessions is accompanied by the shrinking up of our capacity for Divine things. And, if an increase of worldly goods is not accompanied by this result in the spiritual nature, it is because those worldly goods are obtained in the fear of God, and used in the fear of God, and so the noble purpose that animates the soul, the unselfish benevolence of the man, saves him from this sad shrinking of himself into smaller dimensions. Now, I say the Bible treats the soul of man and the world as mutually opposed, so that it is impossible for you to live for this world without hurting your spiritual nature, and impossible for you to seek to gain the world without involving the loss of your own spiritual life and power. If a man gains the world, he loses his soul; and if he is going to save his soul, he must cut loose from this world. This is a worldly age,

and the church is largely infected with worldliness, but that is the old gospel.

Now look a little further, for these are only preliminary thoughts. The most solemn thought is just now coming. We have seen what the nature of the soul is. It constitutes the man's true self. We have seen what the peril of the soul is. It is the foe of the world, and the world is its foe; and therefore as the man lives for the world he is losing himself, and he will surely be cast away.

III.

Now, see, in the third place, what God's notion of the value of a soul is. You have doubtless read these words many times, and yet they never impressed you as giving God's estimate of what a soul is worth. You will notice that the question that our Lord put is the strongest form of a statement. The question involves only one answer, and admits only of one answer. "What is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" means that any man that does gain the world at the loss of his soul is an infinite loser. And when Jesus Christ says in Luke, "For what is a man advantaged if he shall gain the whole world and lose himself or be cast away?" the very question carries with it only one possible answer: he shall not be advantaged at all, but shall be a fool in God's sight, and an infinite loser. That is God's value of a soul. It is worth even more than the whole world. I repeat it, in God's eyes a soul is worth more than the whole world.

Now turn to the eighth Psalm for a moment. David is lying on his back, we will suppose on the plains of Bethlehem, and studying the heavens. He sees those great constellations of stars, and he wonders that God should ever have made man as the ruler of this world and the lord of creation. "Why," he says, "when I con-

sider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars that Thou hast ordained, what is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that Thou visitest him? " Here is a man less than six feet high, and who occupies only a few square feet in this world, after all a very small and insignificant object; he is born and dies inside perhaps of three score and ten years or four score years, just a little fragment of time; and yet here is the sun that is ninety millions of miles away, that is, as large as a thousand Jupiters, and Jupiter is as large as fifteen hundred of this world that we are in, and that sun has been shining ever since man came on this sphere, and is shining still, and will probably shine for ages to come, and some of these stars are so far distant that light, travelling at the rate of two hundred thousand miles a second, has taken five millions of years to get from these stars to this planet: the orbits of these stars are so vast that it takes millions of ages for those stars to revolve round their centres; and when we understand these things, why, we naturally say, "What is man that Thou art mindful of him?" What is a man that occupies so little a space on one little world like this, and lives a little life that extends, from his cradle to his grave, over four score years? What is he? Why, he is like the dust in the balance.

But that is not what God thinks of him. God regards every one of us as of more value than all these stars that stud the firmament. When you go out any evening just turn your eyes up and see that Milky Way that flaunts its white banner from side to side of the heavens. Remember that there are millions on millions of stars there that are so closely set that, like soldiers in a long rank, they stand in a mighty procession. All you can see is the silver helmets. Yet there is not one of you that is not going to say to the sun, "I

am greater than thou," or, to the moon, "I am greater than thou; and when they all melt away and shall fold up their white banner and disappear entirely from the heavens, I shall behold it, for I shall live for ever." And the reason why God put the sceptre of dominion into the hand of man when He created him was that man himself, the last of His creation, was the greatest of it. All these animals are underneath him because he is more majestic than them all. All these trees of the field, and plants, and herbs, and flowers are under him because spiritual life is greater than animal life, and animal life is greater than vegetable life; and this world, because it is nothing but a lump of dead matter, and all these worlds in the firmament, because they are nothing but lumps of dead matter, are all put under man's feet, because there is something more sublime in one man than in all the stars which God ever created.

I remember going for the first time into an observatory when an astronomer was at work. There was a big telescope there, turning its big eye toward the heavens, and he sat at the little eye-piece of the telescope, looking through at the stars. He had a little piece of paper by his side, and he was making calculations. He was estimating what the weight of those stars was, though they were millions of miles away, what were their orbits, what was the rapidity of their motion. He was estimating those questions that have to do with eclipses. "Why," I said to myself, "how plain it is that the man is greater than those worlds, because he is putting those worlds into a balance to see how heavy they are. He is determining what their courses are to be. He is telling us when the earth is coming between the sun and the moon, and when the eclipse of the moon is to come. He is telling us when these vast changes are to take place that are going on among the planets and

among the stars. Surely the man is greater than the stars. The stars could not do that with the man, but the man can do that with the stars."

So I say to you, in God's eyes you are greater than all this world, and greater than all the worlds of the universe. He would have given all those worlds for your redemption if they would have bought that redemption; but they would not, and so He gave His own dear Son. That is another sign of the value which He places on you. He gave the blood of His precious and only begotten Son to redeem your soul.

Now, on the other hand, look at your estimate of yourself. What do you think of your soul? We are told in the twelfth chapter of Hebrews that for one morsel of meat, Esau sold his birthright. What was the birthright? The birthright was the privilege of the eldest son in a family to succeed his father as ruler of the family, and the head of the family, and to have the more valuable portion of the father's inheritance when the father died, and to become the priest of the family when the father surrendered his office, or when the birthright involved the succession to the property of the father, and to the priestly character of the father in the family. Now, for one little morsel of meat when he was hungry—for one savoury mess of pottage, Esau, the child of appetite, sold his birthright, and he could never get it back.

What are you doing? That soul which Christ counts of more value than this world, and of the worlds of the universe, you will sell for a little mess of gratification, a little mess of pottage. You could not gain the whole world, and if you did you would be an infinite loser. If, therefore, you would be a great fool, if you could get the whole world at the expense of your soul, what must your folly appear to be in God's eyes when the actual facts are known? Tell me this: how much of this world could

you get if you gained all that it is possible to get? The richest man I ever knew in America was worth, perhaps, thirty millions of pounds sterling—possibly forty millions of pounds sterling. He had so much money that he did not know what to do with it. The care of it was a perplexity and worry all day and night. It reminds me of Baron Rothschild, who, when a man came up to him and said, "I would like to enter into partnership with you," replied, "Would you? I very much doubt it. How would you like to sleep with half a dozen pistols under your pillow every night?"

That man I am speaking of had so much money that he was in terror of his life. He did not know what day a conspirator might not come into his office and blow up that office and him with the office. He stood in constant terror of robbery and murder. Well now, he had got as large a share in this world, perhaps, as any man on the continent of America. How much is it in comparison with the world itself? A few acres, with the great wide world held in possession by somebody else; a few millions of dollars or pounds sterling, and the great mass of human wealth held by somebody else. You could not get the whole world, could you? You could only get a very small slice of it, after all. Then consider, again, how long you could hold it if you had it all; and how long can you hold what little of it you can get? Remember, it takes twenty, thirty, or forty years to get anything worth thinking of. It takes a business career to be a rich man. It takes the brain-sweat and the heart-sweat, the anxiety of days, and the anxiety of nights, before a man mounts up to such a fortune as that, and then the greater part of his life is gone. How long could you have it if you had it at all? How long would it be yours to hold, and have, and enjoy? Perhaps twenty years of time, or thirty years

of time, or perhaps forty years; but what is that in comparison with eternity?

Let me ask another question. How much satisfaction could you get out of it if you had it? Did you ever see a worldly man that was satisfied? Did you ever get so much of this world so that it ministered any real satisfaction to you? It is just like coming to a broken cistern where you hope to find some water to quench your thirst, and there is nothing but some brackish water that is stagnant or muddy; or, perhaps, the cistern has run dry, or if you get a drink of the water, that is all you get. You go away and thirst, and presently have to come back like the woman of Samaria to draw again. There is nothing to satisfy. I have known a great many worldly men and women who have amassed a great fortune, and surrounded themselves with magnificent appliances for enjoyment and pleasure, but I never yet knew one of them that was a happy person. A man that lived not far from me in the city of New York, worth about two millions of pounds sterling, out of sheer misery, threw himself in front of a railway train, and was crushed to atoms in a moment, simply because he was so unhappy that he did not know what to do with himself. The word "miser" recognises the fact that a man who has been a hoarding man must be miserable.

In one of the English cathedral churches there is a headstone inscribed with the word *Miserimus*. A most wretched man, a man who accumulated a splendid fortune, and died utterly wretched, directed by his will that on his tombstone should be inscribed *Miserimus*—most miserable. Did you ever read the story of Horace Walpole, who, in the language of poetry, is called "the glass of fashion and the mould of form," an upright man, a beautiful man, an elegant man in accomplishments and in manners, and yet at a

comparatively early age he was a disgusted voluptuary or seeker of pleasure, absolutely tired of wealth, tired of social prominence, tired of politics, tired of fame, tired of pleasure. Did you ever read the story of Madame de Pompadour, a brilliant woman at the French court? She said, "I am perfectly wretched. I have furnished my house in Belle Vue from top to bottom in the most elegant style. It gave me a little pleasure two or three days, and then I was tired of it. The king is very fond of me, and the courtiers are very deferential to me, but nothing makes me happy. The fact is, I am dead before my time."

There is nothing more melancholy than the story of people who have gained this world, and have held it, as they thought, securely, and have been surrounded by wealth, and by all the pleasures of appetite, and ambition, and social prominence, and fame, and glory, but behind all that there sat at the feast, as in the old Scythian feasts, a skeleton. Outward joy, inward misery; outward wealth, inward poverty; self-indulgence in all its forms, rottenness of the bones, agony all day, and sleeplessness and restlessness all night.

May I ask another question, and ask you to consider it? Did you never find in this world any bitterness? You never found any real satisfaction. Did you ever find any bitterness? Did you ever drain one of this world's cups and find bitter dregs at the bottom of it? Did you ever nurse pleasure in your bosom and find that, while it sparkled in the many colours of a fascinating serpent, it left a sting in your breast behind it? Did you ever have a sinful joy or a worldly joy, if you please to make the distinction, and afterwards have your conscience pursue you with a whip of scorpions? Did you ever get intoxicated with a human pleasure, and then feel an awful nervous reaction after the intoxication, like a man who

awakens up from a drunken sleep and says, "I am beaten, and yet I have not been in a strife; and I am sick, and yet I have not been ill" ?

Will you not think of all this before God? You could not get all this world, but only a little of it at best. You could not hold what little of it you got but for a little time. It could not give you satisfaction while you had it, and it would leave bitterness behind, as does every selfish pleasure after the pleasure is indulged. And what are you doing? You are bartering your soul for a mess of pottage. You are selling your birthright, and, what is worst of all, you can never buy your soul back if you lose it.

Stop awhile and consider this. Suppose that the richest of you, the one that is most sated with human pleasures, the one that has lived longest and had the most enjoyment out of the pleasures of the world and of sin, should hear God simply say to you, "This night thy soul shall be required of thee." Suppose that you should stand before God before midnight, and you should see at a glance that you were a lost man, your soul at enmity with God, no reconciliation through Christ, no forgiveness of sin, no open door to heaven. Now, consider what your condition would be. You would have lost your soul. Would you have the world? I can understand that a man should risk something where there is a certain gain. I can understand how a man may venture a speculation when there is a possible large result before him. I can understand how a man may give a heavy price for something that he prizes enough to pay the price for it, even though I might say that he paid far too much. I could understand that a man might pay ten times what a house is worth, because he fancies the house, or pay ten times what an object is worth because he is ambitious to obtain the object. But look

at it. Why, there is infernal folly in your course, for suppose you get as much of the world as you can get, and hold it as long as you can hold it, and enjoy it as much as you can enjoy it; suppose that there was not a drop of bitterness in it while you had it; suppose you were born into the possession of the largest fortune on earth, and died at one hundred years of age in possession of it, but lost your own soul, how do you stand then? You are before the bar of God and your soul is lost, is it not? Is not the world lost, too? Why, the thing for which you have sacrificed your eternity is lost, as well as your soul. That is to say, you have lost time, and you have lost eternity, both.

Oh, the folly of it! I cannot speak in such terms as the subject demands. It has been for many years to me a mystery how any man can live without Christ. I have not had a solid day of comfort in all my life that has not been spent in the service of God. I have had opportunities to be rich, but it cost me nothing to forsake those opportunities, for I was already rich. My Father is rich in houses and land. I expect to inherit the universe with Jesus Christ, and it is well enough to go along for a few years a poor man if need be. What is that when a man can stand before God and know that he has saved his soul, and he has got that and the universe besides for eternity? But as to you, why, could there be any bigger fool than you are, even on the basis of a worldly calculation? You give your eternity for time: then you lose time, too. You give your soul for the world: then you lose the world, too. And so you stand before God as one that has lost himself and been cast away, and lost his only treasure, and had cast that away, too.

So I come to you with God's own question, and solemnly ask it in the presence of God. Now, will you

hear it? I am a dying man : I cannot do anything for you but put God's truth before you. Just let us stand in the presence of God together. Let Him ask us this question : What shall it advantage a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? And if you have lost your soul, what are you going to give to buy it back? You had the world once, but it is lost, and if the giving of the world would buy your soul back it would be too late, for you have lost the world, as well as your soul. What are you going to give to buy your soul back? Can you give your tears and your repentance? Why, if Christ's tears and Christ's sorrow would not buy your soul, and you despised that price, do you think that God is going to weigh your tears in the scale? "Come now, and let us reason together, said the Lord. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as wool."

Now, what I want you to do now, what God wants you to do, is to determine in His strength that you will no longer run the risk of losing your own soul for the sake of all the world, if you could get all the world. Then by and by, when you stand in the presence of the Lord, you will find that you have saved your soul, and, though you have sacrificed the world, you have got what is infinitely greater and what never can be given up—God and heaven, and immortality, and eternal blessedness at the right hand of God.

VIII

The Ethics of Forgiveness

“ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”—*1 John* i. 9.

YOU detect flowers from a tropical climate, when you find them in the temperate or frigid zone, by the fact that they are out of their natural soil. How do you know that the Bible is the Word of God? One of the strongest evidences is found in the fact that within the compass of the Holy Scripture you find celestial plants which evidently never sprang up on earthly soil. They are plainly from the gardens of God. The conceptions which the Bible presents to us about forgiveness are infinitely above all human notions on that subject. They are as far above the minds of men as the heavens are higher than the earth. In the so-called alphabetical Psalms, the whole alphabet of the Hebrew is used to begin certain sentences or stanzas in the Psalms. For instance, in the 119th Psalm there are as many divisions as there are letters in the Hebrew alphabet, and each division consists of eight verses, each of which begins with the same letter in order. The first eight verses begin with “aleph,” the first letter of the alphabet; the next with “beth,” the second letter; the

third with "gimel," the third letter of that alphabet, and so on.

The idea seems to be that if you should use all the resources of language, you could never express the glory of the Word of God concerning which that Psalm was written. And so in the thirty-first chapter of Proverbs we have an acrostic poem on the virtuous woman. The verses devoted to the description of such a woman begin with each letter of the alphabet in order, as though to indicate to us that all the words that can be formed from human speech could never tell us the value of a woman such as God has renewed and set in the midst of a household as a centre of light, and influence, and joy, and love.

Now, it is so about forgiveness. The words which are used to represent forgiveness, and to describe the results upon our relation with God, cover almost the entire range of the Hebrew and Greek Alphabets. It seems as though no figure of speech and no form of expression could be employed which has not been employed to give utterance to the mind of God on this subject. I should like now to select two or three of the most emphatic forms of statement to be found in the Bible on the subject, simply as examples of all the rest.

Suppose we take the first chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah, which contains a remarkable setting forth of the Divine forgiveness. In the eighteenth verse we read these words: "Come now, and let us reason together, said the Lord"—or "Hold a reasonable discourse with each other"—"though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." The reason why scarlet and crimson are here used to indicate the deep dye of sin is that the ancient dyers supposed that those colours could not be extracted from any fabric which was coloured with them. Why, it is less than a century since the

method of bleaching scarlet rags was discovered. Many of us remember when all our blotting pads were made of red paper, because, while other rags could be bleached, out of which to make white paper, the scarlet dye proved so impossible to extract from the fabric that it was left in the fabric, and the red rags were made into blotting paper or blotting pads.

Now, if modern invention alone has found a way to extract the scarlet or crimson colour from fabrics, what power and what emphasis must these words have had to the ancients when no such method had as yet been discovered. "Though your sins be as scarlet, and therefore cannot be extracted as to their guilt and defilement by any human means, I will make them as white as snow. And though they be as blood-red as crimson, which represents in the Bible the highest possible aggravation of guilt, they shall be as wool." That is a declaration of the fact that there is no sin whose dye of guilt is so deep that God cannot take that guilt out of the soul and make the soul white as the snow or clean as the wool.

Take the second representation from the 103rd Psalm. That is another marvellous exhibition of the Holy Spirit. We read here: "As the heaven is high above the earth so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us." You will notice that no point in the heavens is indicated—no point in the east or in the west. No man ever yet measured the distance between earth and heaven; and, as to the east and the west, they represent contrary directions. They are so illimitable that you may go eastward till you pass round the entire circle of the heavens and come westward. I wish that I could give some conception of how this matter lies in the mind of God. If you could go out some evening and get a glimpse of Sirius, the dog star, which is

the nearest fixed star, you would look upon a sun which is blazing with a thousand times the light and heat of our sun. It is so immense that if you could go and stand on the orb of Sirius, and from that point look back toward the earth, the earth could nowhere be seen. And the distance is so great and so illimitable that if the entire orbit of Neptune, which is the outermost of the planets of the solar system, were filled with one solid globe of fire as radiant as the sun, and if, from the orb of Sirius, looking through a telescope, you should hold a single filament of a spider's web in front of your eye, the diameter of the spider's web would suffice to cover the entire body that filled the orbit of Neptune. In the nebula of Orion there is a bright star. It is a sun. It is twenty-five thousand times the size of our sun. The sun is fifteen hundred times as large as Jupiter; and Jupiter is one thousand times as large as the earth. You can conceive what must be the power of such a sun as that. Why, if the earth were revolving about that sun as near as it is to the sun of our own system, it would be shrivelled up in the heat of it at the distance of ninety millions of miles, just as a shaving burns in a tremendous furnace fire. You see the idea is that God puts our sins so far away from us that they are out of sight.

The first promise told us that He could take the dye of sin out of the soul. The second promise tells us that He will remove our sins out of sight so that they cannot be seen any more than the earth could be seen from that star in the nebula of Orion, or from the burning, glowing photosphere of Sirius.

Take another of His glorious promises. In the seventeenth verse of the tenth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, we read: "Their sin and their iniquity will I remember no more." That adds a glory to all else that has been said. The passage in Isaiah tells us that God

can take the guilt of sin out of the soul. The passage in the Psalms tells us that He will remove our sins out of His sight, and this tells us that He will remove our sins out of His mind. He will forget them. He will remember them no more. And I say, again, that the thoughts of God on the subject of forgiveness are so far in advance of our thoughts that we can only illustrate the difference by the infinite space that stretches between the earth and the heavens.

Notice that the Apostle says in the text that God is "faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"; and it shows the glory of God's forgiveness that He more than pardons. Suppose that some man who is in prison to-day under a life sentence was, by the grace of the Sovereign pardoned, and appeared to-morrow in the streets of London. The man is pardoned. Is he forgiven? There is a great deal of difference between pardon and forgiveness. That man may once have been in your house, and may have sat down at your table. Then he committed a crime and was put in prison for a life sentence. Will you take that man back into your house and seat him at your table again? Not at all. He is pardoned, but he is not forgiven. Society will never forgive him for that crime, although he is pardoned. He escapes penalty, but he does not escape social judgment. When God pardons a sinner, He makes him new. He begins a work that issues in the absolute renovation of character. So He not only forgives, but He cleanses. He not only forgives, but He reconciles and restores. He sets man back where he would have been if he had not sinned. He makes him a companion of Himself. He prepares him to be a companion of saints and of angels. The glory of God's forgiveness is that it not only changes the man's condition, but it changes the man's character, because character is

what makes final condition ; and therefore no condition is permanently established unless the character on which it depends is established.

So here we have one of the great declarations in the New Testament, that God forgives our sins and cleanses us from all unrighteousness—unrighteousness of the outward life and unrighteousness of the inward life ; from immorality and impropriety in conduct, and from all violations of truth, and honour, and honesty, and moral standards in the inner life ; so that, while some people say that Christianity teaches that a man is saved irrespective of character, we utterly deny that there are any such teachings in Christianity. The glory of this Gospel is that it teaches us that when Jesus Christ bestows forgiveness He sends the Holy Spirit to regenerate the heart, and renew the life, and transform or transfigure the character, so that at the last we shall be presented spotless, blameless, undefiled in the presence of the infinite glory.

Now, this same text shows us the terms of such forgiveness. There is only one word used here that indicates the condition of such forgiveness. It is the word "confess." Now, we ought to compare Scripture with Scripture. The word "confess" may mean one thing, or more than one thing, as the case may be. If you turn to the thirty-second Psalm, you will find the finest discourse in the Old Testament on the subject of forgiveness and confession. In that Psalm three words or phrases are used which are strikingly alike. "I acknowledge my sin" ; "My iniquity have I not hid" ; "I said, I will confess my transgression unto the Lord." It might be said that these three words mean the same thing. To acknowledge, not to hide, and to confess, are very closely similar terms. But suppose we look a moment. I think we shall see that those three words refer to the three forms of confession. There is first a confession to

myself ; then a confession to my fellow-man whom I have wronged, and also a confession to my God ; and without this threefold confession the work of confession is not complete.

In that phrase in the first chapter of the Epistle of John there is nothing said with regard to whom confession is made. "If we confess our sin He is faithful and just to forgive," and the reason may be because the whole subject of confession is lodged in that one word. For instance, if I have sinned I must acknowledge it to myself. Men oftentimes begin by denying to themselves that they are sinners. The Apostle refers to this in the previous verse. He says, "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." That is a denial to ourselves of our sin, not a denial to God, for the same thing is not referred to in the verse that follows the text: "If we say that we have no sin we make Him a liar and His word abideth not in us." That is evidently denying it to God, because we are told that we make God a liar. But, in the other case, we are told that if we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. So I take it that the first confession is an acknowledgment to myself. It is bringing my sin to my knowledge. It is looking my sin fully in the face. It is saying to myself, "Yes, it is true that I am a sinner."

If you want to get an illustration of this look in the 18th chapter of Luke. The publican standing afar off would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but he smote upon his breast and said, "God be merciful to me the sinner"—as it is in the Greek: not "*a* sinner," but "*the* sinner." He smote upon his breast as though he felt that all the possibilities of sin were represented and concentrated in his own heart and conscience and life,—as though within him all the sin that could be seen was to be found. That is acknowledging sin to myself. It is

saying, "I am the sinner. There is no doubt about my guilt. There is no doubt about my defilement. There is no doubt about the reasonableness of my condemnation." That is the first step in confession. Look your sin fully in the face, and acknowledge to yourself the fact of it and the guilt of it.

The next thing is to confess it to those whom you have wronged. That is the part of confession that is very often overlooked. May I call your attention to the 5th chapter of Matthew, the Sermon on the Mount, and to a remarkable word of the Lord there? He says in the 5th chapter and the 23rd verse, "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way. First be reconciled to thy brother: then come and offer thy gift." The idea is that if you are coming up to the place of prayer or worship with an offering in your hand to be presented to the Lord, and it occurs to you on the way that there is an unsettled quarrel between you and your brother, you are to leave your gift before the altar—not complete your sacrifice or offering; leave your gift there before the altar, not upon the altar but before it, and go your way and find your brother and be reconciled to him, and make it all right with him, and then come and complete your offering to God.

Now, what is the lesson? The lesson is that it is impossible for you to have peace with God for forgiven sin while there is an act of restitution or reparation that you are bound to make to your fellow man. I have in mind a most interesting and most ordinary story, but it is a fact. One of my friends who is a famous evangelist was, on one occasion, in the enquiry room, confronted by a woman who was a trained nurse, and for several years had been attending at the bedside of the sick and dying. She was evidently in great trouble about her sins, and

she could get no relief. For several nights she appeared in the enquiry room and sought to have a personal conversation with this evangelist; but somehow he felt that he had not got to the core of her difficulty, and so on the third or fourth night he said, "Madam, I think that you had better not come to me any more. I cannot do you any good. It is perfectly plain to me that there is something that is wrong between you and God, or else wrong between you and your fellow man." And then she made a very simple confession. She said that while she was attending a dying patient, she had abstracted from the cupboard that was pertaining to the sick room five bottles of wine, which she appropriated to her own use, and that the patient had died and she had never made confession, and it was too late to make reparation, for the person to whom the five bottles of wine belonged was dead. My friend said to her, "Are there any survivors?" "Yes, there are a son and a daughter." "Where do they live?" "They live in Glasgow." This scene took place in the city of London. Said he, "My advice to you is that you seek out these people and make to them a plain confession of this sin of yours, and make reparation." Said she, "I am a poor woman. I cannot afford the journey to Glasgow, and I have no money to pay even for the bottles of wine." "Well," said he, "in my opinion you will never have peace with God till you do your best to make reparation for that wine."

Although the woman might have written a letter in acknowledgment, she raised the money and took the journey to Glasgow, and saw those people, and made a personal confession of her sin to them, and said, "I will pay for this wine just as soon as I can earn the money." Then she got peace. She would never have had peace if she had not made reparation. I tell this story, plain as it is, simple as it is, and uninteresting as it may

be, because it is a practical illustration of the fact that there is a confession to my fellow man that belongs to me if I am going to make my sin right with Almighty God. I first must look at that sin myself and acknowledge it. Then, if I have done an injury to other people, I must do what I can to repair that injury and to make up for the damage, for there is no such thing as peace with God if there is no such thing as peace with my own conscience.

And I want to say that if you have damaged your fellow man by a slander or a lie, you have to make up for that, or you will never have peace. If you have stolen what does not belong to you, you have to return it or make reparation for it, or you never can have peace. If you have even indulged in hateful, disloyal, malicious, dispositions towards another man or another woman, that thing has to be put out of your way; and if there has been any open expression or manifestation of it there must be a confession as open as the sin has been, or there will never be peace. What God wants is that I should tell myself that I am a sinner; then tell the man that I have injured that I have sinned against him. I must make my confession as public as my iniquity has been. You are not called upon to tell any congregation of a damage that you have done to a private individual of whom nobody knows anything but yourself and that individual; but, I repeat that so far as the sin has been an open sin, the confession must be an open confession, and the reparation must go as far as the damage has gone, or you will vainly seek peace.

The third element in this confession is confession to God. "I acknowledge my sin unto Thee." If you want to see a splendid sample of confession of sin to God read that 51st Psalm. If there ever was a man who sinned against his fellow men it was David. He sinned against

Uriah the Hittite. He sinned against Bath-sheba, and, so far as the sin was known, he sinned against the whole people of Israel and gave the enemy of the Lord occasion to blaspheme. David's confession was just as public as his crime was public. Hence he wrote the 51st Psalm. Hence he acknowledged his sin to his servants and the members of his court, as you will see if you read the narrative of Nathan's rebuke to him in the presence of his court and his acknowledgment of the sin in the same presence. But, in that 51st Psalm, when he is thinking about this sin what does he say? "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight"; that is to say the sin was so flagrantly against God that he even forgot for the time being that it was a sin against man. In the 15th chapter of Luke you have the same thing. The prodigal goes away from his father into a far country, and wastes his substance in riotous living, and when he comes back to his father what does he say? "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee." He puts them in the right order. Not "before thee and against heaven," but, first of all, the sin is against God, and, secondly, the sin is "in thy sight" also.

May I mention a single incident that occurred in my own history? A good many years ago, in the upper portion of New England, in a little social gathering of ladies and gentlemen, when we were giving puzzles in literature to be solved, I gave a very obscure quotation, the source of which I knew, and I said, "I should like to see who of you between now and next week can find the source of that quotation." Next week we came together, and a bright sprightly girl in the company said, "I have found that quotation," and she gave me the source of it. Twenty years passed away. I received a letter from that woman, who had now married a prominent clergyman in the Congregational Church in the United States. She was

now the mother of five children, and a Christian worker; but she said, "I want to say to you that for twenty years I have had no peace of mind because I misled you with regard to that quotation. I led you to suppose that I found it by my own skill, when the fact is that I went to the most literary person that I knew in the city of Boston and ascertained from him the source of that quotation." Why, most people would have said: "That is a very trifling thing anyway," but she knew that a deception in a small matter lay on her conscience, and for twenty years she violated her peace with her conscience and her God, till she wrote me and made the confession of what many people would call a very slight violation of truth and uprightness.

And, the longer I live, the more I am satisfied that the conscience is a whip of scorpions, and that if you do not want your conscience to be your enemy, and to lash you with that whip of scorpions, you need to make your peace with yourself first of all, then with your fellow man, and then with your God. Then peace may fill your mind and spread her bright wings in protection over your life.

I want now to call attention to one little word that has not been mentioned yet, and that is the word "just." In all the sermons that have been preached from that text I have never yet seen any reference to that word "just." We think of God in forgiveness as being merciful, but we do not think of God in forgiveness as being just; and yet the Apostle says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and *just* to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Why faithful? Because He has promised. Why just? Because He has laid our iniquity upon Jesus, and Jesus has satisfied the penalty of the law. And when I take refuge in the mercy and grace of Jesus, it is unfair for God to exact a second penalty from me, inasmuch as the debt is already paid,

I beg you to notice those two words, for they are intended for your comfort and mine. Have you any question with regard to your forgiveness? Put it away from you, as dishonouring both the faithfulness of God and the justice of God. You insult His mercy if you doubt that He will keep His covenant promise; and you insult His rectitude if you suppose that, having exacted the penalty of your sin from His dear Son, He will exact the penalty again from you.

Let me illustrate this. Some years ago in what were called the Petty Sessions in Ireland there was a young lad who was taken up for a misdemeanour and brought before the judge. He was proved to be guilty. He was sentenced to pay a fine of thirty shillings. His mother said to the judge, "Your honour, we have not got thirty shillings in the world, and we could not raise it," and she pleaded for a pardon for her boy. The judge said, "Madam, the law is inexorable. Your son has committed this fault, and the penalty is thirty shillings or thirty days in jail." The elder brother, while the court was in session and the trial was going on, seeing what the result was going to be, went away and sold all the implements on his farm and gathered thirty shillings. He came back to the court. The sentence had been pronounced, and the boy had been taken away by the officer to the jail. The elder brother paid the money into the judge's hands, and got a written release, and ran after the officer in the street, and overtook him just as he had come to the jail door with the culprit held by the hand. He showed his release, and from the door of that jail he took his brother out of the hands of the officer. That judge was faithful to forgive that misdemeanour when the penalty was paid. Was he not also just? Would it not have been a violation of justice to put that boy into jail after that thirty shillings was paid? God has an infinite

sense of justice as well as of mercy. When He offers you salvation in Jesus Christ, when He tells you that He laid your sin on Jesus Christ, His faithfulness to His own word and His sense of justice demands that you should not come under the penalty of sin for which Christ has atoned. And so the precious Word of God encourages us to believe, and believe absolutely, for it tells us, "If we confess our sins to ourselves, to our fellow man, and to God, He is faithful, and, not only so, but He is just, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

So I beseech you to come to this great Saviour. Get this full and free forgiveness. Say to yourself, "I am a sinner. All sin finds its fountains in my soul." Go to your brother against whom you have offended, or your sister against whom you have offended, or your fellow man against whom you have offended, and make your restitution or your reparation. Then get down before the altar of God, and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner for Christ's sake"; and His faithfulness and His justice will combine to forgive your sin and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness.

IX

The Sower and the Soil

“ Behold, a sower went forth to sow.”—*Matthew* xiii. 3.

THOUGH we call this the parable of the sower, it might also be called the parable of the soil; for really the stress of the parable is not upon the sower nor upon the seed, but upon the soil. The seed, as our blessed Lord Himself tells us, is the Word of God. There is the first introductory thought—the seed is the Word of God hiding within it infinite possibilities. I would to God that we could ever feel that at the back of the man who speaks, who is nothing but the sower scattering God’s seed, God Himself addresses human hearts upon matters of infinite moment. His Word is called the seed. A seed is a germ; it has within it the sources of plant life. Burial in the earth is the development of the germ; and this seed which is the Word of God hides within it the most precious germ in the universe. Jesus Christ is the kernel; and even what we call the Word of God, precious as it is, is only the husk. So precious is this kernel, that the Word of God is the husk that envelopes and protects the infinitely precious germ. And when that Word is sown in an obedient heart, the germ takes root and there develops in the life an image of Christ Himself.

There are four sorts of soil that are indicated here, and the thing which is noticeable about them is, their degree of reception of the seed. And let me say that it is a most

noticeable thing here, that although you may keep out the seed of God from the human soul you cannot keep it down if you once let it in. That is the reason why Satan is on hand everywhere, while we seek to sow the seed, immediately to catch it away. He can perhaps keep it out, but he cannot keep it down if once it be let in. So let us all be sure that Satan does not keep it out. As I have said, there are four sorts of soil here. We may designate them in a very simple way so as to remember them. In the first soil the seed gets no hold; in the second it gets no root; in the third it gets no room, and so yields no fruit; but in the fourth it gets hold, it gets root, it gets room, and so it gets fruit.

First it gets no hold. It fell on beaten paths, the trodden way-side. You cannot go through a ploughed field without seeing parts of the field, usually along the borders of it, where the sower himself has been accustomed to tread, and where the plough in breaking up the field has not reached. Sometimes in Oriental lands you will find a path right across the middle of a ploughed field, and that is the way over which travel goes on night and day. Now whenever the seed falls there, it finds a trodden path, it can get no root, no hold, and the birds of the air that are hovering over that ploughed field where the sower is at work pounce on the seed and carry it away. How simple is the illustration of spiritual truth! The soil where the seed of God gets no hold is the heart where the Word is listlessly heard and makes no impression.

I think we may say that there are three obstacles in the way of the Word getting hold upon such a kind of heart as this: first the dull ear, secondly the dull mind, and thirdly the dull heart. The dull ear that is taken up with listlessness which prevents the Word really awakening what we call sensation; it does touch the organs of the

hearing but it awakens no response in the mind so that there is no reception of what is heard. Then there may be a dull mind, a mind that is dull because it is full of other holdings, full of thoughts that are wandering over the whole face of the earth; taken up and absorbed and engrossed it may be with trifles. So again there is a dull heart that is hard and cold by insensibility and unbelief, so that while the Word is nominally, externally heard, it is not heard by the mind, by the heart, by the conscience, or by the will.

Our Lord Jesus uses one figure of speech here when He speaks of the birds of the air who came and devoured it up. A bird hovers over a field, he sweeps down upon it rapidly, and instantaneously catches a grain of seed and devours it. Our Lord in the application of the parable tells us that these birds of the air are the agents of the devil,—“Then cometh the wicked one and catcheth away that which was sown in their hearts.” Out in every church vestibule the devil’s birds are so thick that if you had an eye open to see them you would see nothing else. Inside every vestibule the devil’s birds are a perfect flock. If you listen you could hear the flutter of their wings. What is one of those birds of the air? Mirth. Sometimes when the Word of God is preached you will see one man nudging another with his elbow and smiling, or one man may be merely whispering to another, and then there is a titter. That is the devil’s bird, frivolity, laughing away an impression, turning away a solemn truth of God by a reference to something that is light and merry, and frivolous and unworthy.

When in October, 1899, I was lecturing in Mr. Moody’s Evangelistic Institute at Chicago, Mr. Moody came in one day to the dinner table and said he had just been to see a Swede, who had been sick of typhoid fever. He had been for weeks near the

gate of death, and although he had never met Mr. Moody he sent for him. He had to speak to him through an interpreter. He wanted to deliver a message to dear Mr. Moody, and it was this. He had heard that in some of the public meetings held in London about that time, Francis Murphy, the temperance lecturer, was making the people explode with laughter by his funny stories; and he said to Mr. Moody "I have found all through my life that in the midst of a solemn address, if you tempt the people to laughter, that is the time when the devil's birds of the air take away the seed of truth sown in human hearts." It was a most solemn warning, and we need that warning. The devil takes advantage of the diversion of a laugh, of the creation of a frivolous feeling or emotion—he takes advantage of that point in a discourse or that interruption in the impression for the birds to swoop down and carry away the sacred seed.

Another of these birds is criticism. You do not like the minister's appearance, the cut of his hair or of his coat, you do not like his gesture, or there is something else you do not fancy, some mispronunciation, or the want of correct language. Something or other awakens criticism, and that criticism is the devil's bird in the air to catch away the seed of God. I remember when I first began to preach a father came to me making this confession. He said, "I heard not long ago a sermon, and my son was with me; we were walking home; my son was behind me, I was walking with a neighbour, and I said to him that I did not think the sermon amounted to very much, that there was no originality of thought about it, and that it did not impress my own mind at all. My son had been deeply convicted under that sermon, but he heard his father's criticism, and it banished the conviction."

If we could go out of a place of prayer in solemn

silence, and instead of talking about the minister and the sermon, specially, in a light and frivolous way, if we would first of all go where we could get alone with God and ask a blessing on the discourse, how many of the birds of the devil might go away without any seeds in their beaks?

Another of these devil's birds of the air is art. Some people say that we have got a very bald, bare worship in our churches. If we had the world's art in the place of prayer, we would have it full of the devil's birds of the air. That is a common way in which the devil gets his flocks of birds in these days into places of worship, so that attention is diverted to lofty arches, beautiful pillars and columns and decorations of all kind, and the play of an æsthetic, instead of the simplicity of an apostolic worship. Now the first thing you want is to have the seed of God get hold. Beware then that there be nothing in you encouraging others by which Satan gets a chance to take away the seed of God before it has begun even to take root.

So we come to the second kind of soil, which is soil of a rocky character where there is a thin layer of earth, and rock beneath. What does that mean? Our Lord says it corresponds to those who, when they hear the Word, immediately with joy receive it, but they have no root in themselves, and by and by when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the Word, these that appear to be converted disciples are made to offend and stumble, and they give up their hope and their faith. What does this mean? It is very simple. The seed gets no root. As in the first case there was no impression made, so here there is no depth of conviction. All the impression is a shallow one, although there is a kind, enthusiastic reception of the Word as though it met a felt want in mind and heart,

it is transient, it soon passes away, and there is no permanent effect because there is no depth of the spiritual life.

Now, what does this mean, to drop the figure and the parable for a moment? A lack of deep conviction. Our blessed Lord says, "By and bye, when tribulation ariseth"—and Luke adds, "In times of temptation they fall away." You have seen it a thousand times in your own experience. Here is a young man, for instance, who hears a sermon that strikes his mind as something needed by him in its presentation of truth, and you think that he is going to make a true and earnest disciple of Jesus Christ; but a few days pass away and lo and behold he has lost all conviction and is back again in the world. He cannot stand a laugh. A light word is the devil's keenest sword, and many a time a light word has severed the bond that was forming between a soul and Jesus Christ. Here is a man that cannot stand the ridicule of his companions. They sneer upon him, pour contempt upon him, and he has so much regard for their approval and good opinions that he forsakes regarding the opinion of God for that of the sneerers and blasphemers with whom he keeps daily company.

I was talking once to a young lad with regard to his own salvation, and I was presenting him with a few test questions. I said, "Are you in business?" He replied, "I am." "Where are you in business?" I asked, and he told me. "I suppose," I said, "there are a lot of errand boys round about you there?" "Yes." "Do they help you in your Christian life, or do they hinder you?" "Well," he said, "My dear sir, they are no help to me, I can assure you." "Then why do you not give up trying to live a Christian life? What is the use of trying to serve God amid all these hindrances and difficulties?" "Well," said he, "I have thought sometimes that it was perhaps a good thing for me to have a little ridicule,

because I think it makes me a stronger Christian." You see that boy understood it all at 15 years of age. He had learned what I have already referred to, that the wind that swings and rocks the tree to and fro only makes the tap root strong if there is any tap root to the tree. So do not let a laugh weaken your conviction or resolution in God; do not be afraid of ridicule and be led to offend against God because of the laughter of an ungodly companion.

Then there are some that can stand a laugh that cannot stand a blow—malignant opposition, hindrances put in the way by the devil and his angels, obstacles to holy living and holy service. And there are still others that cannot stand their own lusts that offer a bait to them to draw them back from God into earth. We need in the first instance, to have the seed take hold on the soil and we need it to take root and to abide in the presence of God till it has got root and has become fastened, firmly fixed, until it penetrates to the lowermost conviction, and the lowermost affection, and the lowermost resolution, and takes hold of the entire being. Then let the laugh come, let the opposing blow come, let the bait of the world come to us, we shall stand firm in God if the seed has got firm root in us.

What is the third kind of soil? It is the soil where thorns spring up and choke the seed. Now notice that the best kind of soil frequently has weeds in it. In fact, weeds do not particularly like a poor soil. You need not be surprised, if you have got a heart that is disposed to obedience, to find all kinds of evil growth springing up in it that need continually to be uprooted and thrown aside in order that the seed of God might have more chance to grow. See how our dear Lord indicates to us what the thorns are: the care of the age, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things enter in and choke the Word

and it becometh unfruitful. See the wonderful discrimination of our Lord. What is the care of this world? That is the poor man's thorn. What is the deceitfulness of riches? That is the rich man's thorn. And what are the lusts of other things entering in but everybody's thorn. You may not have riches, but you have care; you may have riches and care together. Observe it is not only the rich man that is absorbed in greed; the poorest man may be as greedy as the richest man; the man that has nothing may be as covetous as the man that has everything. So our dear Lord says, "If you want the Word of God to take deep root in your hearts beware of the thorns, which, though they do not kill the seed, choke it and make it unfruitful." Paul says in the 12th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "Let us lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset us." A sin is a sin, but a weight is not necessarily a sin; the weight is something that hinders my progress. Sin kills Christian living; weights hinder Christian advance. And so not to have the root at all is to lose all power from the Word; and to have a root and no mature fruit is to have a Christian life that grows tall and slender and spindle-like and fruitless like a stalk of wheat that is not in ear.

I should like for a moment to emphasise this thought—it is one of the grandest and most significant that I know in the New Testament. There are people in the Church of God who are true Christians, and have a sort of root in the soil of the Church, and a sort of standing in the Church, but they have no mature fruit; they are erect, it may be, they are honest and honourable, and upright men and women; you could not bring anything against their integrity, their honour, their general uprightness of character and course, but they have no fruit for God, they never win a soul to God, they are not

large givers, they are not self-denying servants of God, they are not immersed in the work of God, they are not seeking to win the lost and uplift the fallen, they do not believe in home missions, or in foreign missions, they have not any seed of propagation because there is no ear and no grown corn in the ear. There is tallness, but no breadth; there is a certain sort of growth without development. Our Lord never uses figures that do not illustrate, and this figure illustrates most painfully the subject with which He is dealing. I think it is the sorrow of pastors all over the world to-day that they have so many members in the body of Christ whose place they dare not dispute as disciples but whose fruit seems strangely conspicuous by its absence. On the other hand, here is a noble soul rooted in Jesus Christ, growing up into Jesus, that plucks up the thorns and thistles on every side to give plenty of room for growth and development, and then if you look you will find an ear with the full-grown kernel in the ear, the seed of propagation of Christian life and Christian influence on every side.

Now, just a word or two in practical application. I want you to notice in the first place what I have said about this precious seed of God. What makes a fruitful believer? The fact that he recognises first of all that the precious seed sown in his heart is the gift of God. Did you ever think how precious seed wheat is? Suppose there were only one seed of wheat in the world to-day, and that seed were lost: all the efforts of man in this advanced period of the world's history could not create one new seed of wheat. If the last seed of wheat were gone it would be irrecoverable by the power of man. Here is the precious seed of the Word; suppose it were gone, all the wisdom of man could not reproduce it. It is the gift of God, and it can never be replaced by man if that gift is withdrawn,

I want you to notice, too, in this parable that sowing is not at all conspicuous. Scarce a word is said about the sowing except the fact that the seed was sown. The emphasis is on the precious seed and on the various receptiveness of the soil, and the reason is that the sowing is not of much importance. A little child may drop a seed that shall be as effectively sown as though the most intelligent or cultured man or woman on earth had been the sower. Nay, the wind may carry the kernel and lodge it in the forest or the ploughed field, and it shall spring up and be as potent for good as though an angel had dropped it into the soil. So the great thing is to be sure to see it scattered. Let the little children take it and sow it if they will; let the unlettered believer be the sower if he will; let the very winds of heaven waft the seed, only let it be sown broadcast over the earth.

Then notice how important the believer feels it to be that the seed of God should get into the soil. What are you going to do with that trodden path yonder? The only way in which it can be made a fruitful harvest field is to run the plough through it, and because it is very hard the plough must go very deep, and there must be a sore breaking up of these trodden plods. If you want the seed of God to take root, you must consent to the plough-share going through you, and the stronger the plough-share is, and the more terrible its contest with the soil, the more you will know how much hardness there is to be overcome. Let us welcome God's plough-share of sorrow and tribulation; let us welcome the providences that startle us from our security, that break up our dullness and listlessness; let us welcome the sickness that brings us to the edge of death and of hell, if the change is to break up our indifference and banish our insensibility, and turn the trodden path into a furrowed field.

I think, moreover, we learn from this parable, in the

first place, not to count too confidently on external results. If one seed out of four sown for God reaches the good soil and bears abundant fruit, it is all that the parable of the sower at the outset justifies us in expecting. We must know that a large part of our labour will appear to be in vain. If Christ Himself sowed seed on trodden fields, where it never took hold, on rocky places where it could not have found root, in thorny places where it never found room, you need not wonder if much of the labour which is bestowed seems to return to you vague and fruitless. Blessed be God, the missionaries of the cross who have encountered opposition and persecution, and the dead indifference and inertia of heathen peoples, have gone on like Judson. When he was asked, "How bright is the prospect?" he replied, "Bright as the promises of God." Yet he laboured ten years, and had only eighteen converts to show for his labour. If one seed in four sprouts and bears fruit, it is all that the parable of the sower justifies you in expecting.

Remember, in the second place, that one thoroughly converted man or woman is a great trophy of the grace of God. If one seed taking root in a soul means an ear and the full corn in the ear, thirty fold in a fruitful soul gives us the seed for another harvest when that soul has once received and developed the seed of the Word of God. Have you ever noticed that while in the first parable the seed is the Word of God, in the second parable, the parable of the tares, the good seed are the children of the kingdom? What a sweet development of thought this is! When you first go and sow the Word of God, the seed, you are simply declaring the message of salvation; but when that seed springs out in the human soul the product you get is not mere Word of God, but it is disciples, and these disciples become in the second sowing the seed with which God covers the world. It is the Bible with

the man behind it, it is the believer with the message of a believer by which God changes the face of this world.

Do you want me to tell you in a sentence how that seed can be fruitful? I will tell you. Take what you have heard and what you know, and go, and in the silence and secrecy of a place of communion with God, open your heart to the celestial dew, asking God to bless the truth that you are acquainted with unto your own soul; ask Him that it may take root in your mind and heart and conscience and will, till it takes up the very substance of your being into itself; and then seek to live in such a way, plucking up the thorns and thistles in your life and putting away the weights that hinder your Christian progress, that you may not only have root, but room, and, having room, abundant fruit.

X

A Wondrous Condescension

"Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear My voice and open the door I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me."—*Revelation* iii. 20.

THIS is at once a picture and a parable: a picture, for it has in it the pictorial form of representation; a parable, for it teaches us through symbols a most precious lesson. There are four conspicuous places in the New Testament in which the same figure is used; a door opening into some apartment, a key wherewith to open it, and the door either shut or open, as the case may be. For instance, in Matthew, the 7th chapter and 7th verse, we read: "Ask and it shall be given you. Seek, and ye shall find. Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." There the door is the door of supplications. If we knock, the door will be opened. In the 25th chapter of Matthew, in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, when the marriage procession entered into the marriage chamber or place of festivity, the door was shut. Afterwards the foolish virgins came and knocked and called in vain. He, from within, said, "I know you not." Then in the Epistle indited to the church at Philadelphia we have the door standing open, having been unlocked by the key of David in the hand of the omnipotent and omniscient Redeemer. And now we have in this passage a door shut. The door in the

25th of Matthew is the door to celestial blessing and privilege. The door in the Epistle to Philadelphia is the door of opportunity and access. The door here is the door to the human heart.

I think there is, perhaps, scarce a single passage in the New Testament that combines more encouragement with warning than these words of Christ to the Laodicean Church, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with Me."

Now, obviously, there are three great prominent thoughts here. The first is the request; the second is the response; and the third is the result.

It is one of those pictures, those pictorial parables, that a little child can understand. It is not couched in language with which we are not familiar. It is not itself the suggestion of an illustration from any of the obscure sciences, or from historical facts, or events that are not generally known. Here we meet the most familiar objects almost that can have impressed our vision. It is impossible to go a hundred steps in any city without coming upon a house with a doorway, and with a knocker and a bell. You can scarcely go anywhere in the rural districts for any distance without coming upon a mansion or an obscure hovel. And we all know what the door means, and what the knocking means, and what the coming in means, and what the supping means. How blessed and gracious that the Lord should have put instruction for us in such a form that a little child can comprehend and apprehend it, by a pictorial illustration like a picture book for our instruction. Here, in the first place, is Christ without and the soul within. Then there is the soul opening the shut door, and Christ enters and Himself is within.

Now, first, look at Christ outside, and then let us look

at Him inside. Then see how He comes inside, and what a difference it makes.

First He is outside. "Behold I stand at the door and knock."

The first thing that impresses me in this wonderful picture is condescension. Who is this that is asking to come in? Who is this whose pierced hand knocks at the door, and whose gentle voice calls the soul by name and asks to be admitted?—for you notice that the knocking is accompanied by a calling. That is an Oriental custom. When Peter went out of his prison down to the house of Mary, the mother of John, where many were gathered together praying, he knocked at the gate, but he called also; and when Rhoda came to hearken she heard Peter's voice, and she went in and told how he stood before the gate. We go and knock, but we do not often call. But in Eastern lands they accompanied the knock with the voice of the one who knocked. And so our Lord says, "If any man hear My voice," not simply My knock—"if any man hear My voice and open the door." Look at the condescension.

If I were asked to say what it is that distinguishes the Christian religion above all other religions, what do you think would be the answer? What is it that peculiarly distinguishes the Christian religion above all others? It is not incarnation, for other religions have taught that God was manifest in the flesh. It is not sacrifice, for other religions have taught even bloody rites of sacrifice. It is not worship, for worship is common to all religions. What is it? The Christian religion is mainly peculiar for this: it is the only religion among men that has ever represented God as seeking man. Other nations represent man as seeking God. That is the uniform peculiarity of them all, from the lowest fetish worship to the highest form of Brahminical

idolatry, or Mahommedanism without either. Man is always represented as seeking God. But in the Christian religion alone, God is represented as seeking man. You may look in any other religion in vain to find such a phrase as you will find in the 4th chapter of the Gospel according to John, at the 23rd verse: "For the Father seeketh such to worship Him." Men seek to worship God, even under false forms. But the only God that ever sought worshippers is Jehovah. The only God that ever looked down on rebels and said, "How shall I put thee among the children?" is our God. The only God that ever came down among men to lift men up to Himself is God in Christ.

Now, here you have the very Saviour Himself, the incarnate Son of God, coming and standing before a human soul that has rejected and repelled Him, and, knocking at the door, and standing knocking, and calling patiently to induce the soul to open the door to His incoming.

Now let us try to get, first of all, this magnificent conception of the condescension of grace, that God did not leave men to find Him, but found them; that God did not leave men to love Him, but loved them; that God did not leave men to seek Him, but sought them; that God did not leave men to make the first approaches unto Himself, but made the first approaches to them. And I believe that that is, after all, the substance of the doctrine of election, that God loved us when we hated Him, that God sought us when we rejected Him, that God atoned for us when we hated Him, and that the whole of the grand plan and its execution and its application begins and ends with Him.

Now see how this very passage of Scripture indicates the condescension of Christ. To whom were these words addressed? To the church of the Laodiceans, to whom

also has been addressed the most scathing rebuke that is to be found in those seven epistles. In fact, I do not know that there is a more terrible message in the Word of God than that message to Laodicea. "I would thou wert cold or hot; so, then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth." Yet it is to this very people to whom this epistle addresses this scathing, scourging message, in which the precious Saviour is represented as standing outside the door, knocking on the door, standing knocking as though not easily discouraged by the indifference of the soul within, and calling with the sweet voice of gracious intonation that He might win the rebel soul to open unto Him.

This is a wonderful picture. You cannot find anything like that in any other religion. The Christian religion alone ever set the Son of God before the closed door of the human soul, knocking, and calling, and asking to come in.

Now what is the condition of the soul? The door is closed, and Christ is without. What a picture of the desolation and destitution of sin. God not in all the thoughts; God not in all the affections; God not in all the resolutions, and plans, and purposes; God unspoken of except in the language of rebellion, of hatred, perhaps of blasphemy; God deliberately shut out from a man's life, conversation, conduct, hopes, desires, projects; God forgotten, though He is merciful; God ignored, though He is sovereign; God despised, though He is gracious; God resisted, though He is a God of love; destitution as well as desolation; poor, wretched, miserable, blind, naked, and yet like an idiot, like a lunatic, who clothes himself in rags and sits on a three-legged stool and waves a rod in his hand and plaits thorns and puts them on his brow, and then he is a king. Thou knowest not that

thou art wretched. Poor and miserable, and blind and naked, he says: "I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing." That is the condition of any soul when God is outside. There are poverty and misery and desolation and destitution inside, but withal there is an ignorance of the actual state of things. Men go about to establish their own righteousness, and do not submit themselves to the righteousness of God. They lock on their filthy rags, and they think that they are royal robes, and they imagine that they could go before the presence of the Almighty in those filthy garments, for they do not see the filth or the rags.

Now look at the other side of this picture. Christ is without. Let us see Him within. See His marvellous works. "If any man hear My voice and will open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." "I will come in to him." Entrance. "And will sup with him, and he with Me." Communion. When Jesus Christ comes into the soul everything that is divine comes in with it—eye-salve that anoints the eyes so that we see the rags and the filth, and see Him in His glory; the gold tried in the fire that makes rich; and the white raiment of divine righteousness to clothe our nakedness. That is a wonderful guest that knocks on the door. If He comes in He comes in not to be entertained, but to entertain. He comes in not to live on your bounty, but to have you live on His. He comes in not to take of your hospitality, but to become the host while He is the guest and to spread a table before you in the presence of your enemies, and to anoint your head with oil, so that your cup runneth over. There never have been any visitors on earth come to the hovels of the poor in such a fashion as that. Christ comes to bring with Him everything you need, to displace desolation by beauty, and to displace destitution by wealth. He comes to supply your poor

table with the bread and the water of life and all the delicacies of God. He comes to fill your wardrobe with raiment such as angels might covet, and crowd your house with the gold of the celestial city.

I want you to notice, too, how remarkable is the reiteration, the apparent repetition here. "I will come in to him, and will sup with him, *and he with Me.*" Of course, if a man sups with me I sup with him. But Christ would make it plain that it is not only a conferment of blessing, but a mutual participation. And this, again, can only be understood by reference to Oriental custom. You are going through Palestine, we will say, at the present day. A man sees you passing by the house when a meal is served, and he has nothing, it maybe, but a few dried dates or raisins, and a little bread and water, and he asks you to come and sit down with him and enjoy his simple repast. Now, if you had such an invitation it would be considered a kind of insult if you did not partake of what was offered. He expects not only that you will sit down at his table, but that you will share in his repast; and that sharing in his repast is a kind of covenant between you and him. If you partake of the salt of his dish it makes you both friends. It is the salt of covenant, and he can never lift his hand against you, nor you lift your hand against him henceforth. I remember that many years ago there was an Arab who was travelling among those nomadic tribes in the East, and he came, unknown to himself, on the very tent of his arch enemy. He did not recognise the other robber chieftain in whose tent he was, and at whose board he was sitting; but the robber chieftain, who was his arch enemy, recognised him, and he knew that if that man should take salt at his repast he could never again lift his hand against him; so he managed to get out of the tent and leave others to conduct the repast; and then when the man had left the tent and

gone on his way he pursued him and killed him. Now, our blessed Lord, speaking to Oriental people, speaking to them in the language of Oriental life, says, "I will come in to him and will sup with him, ~~and he with Me;~~ and for us to partake of the same salt of the covenant shall make us everlastingly one." It is union and communion. It is participation in the same blessed privileges and provisions.

And there is another very sweet and beautiful thought about it. This suggests the idea that our Lord not only confers a blessing but receives one; that He not only gives us satisfaction in His presence, but gets satisfaction out of our presence. ~~I think~~ This is one of the most beautiful thoughts presented to us in the Bible, that "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in them that hope in His mercy." You often think of what God can do for you. Do ~~you~~ ever think of what ~~you~~ can do for God? We often talk about our trusting God. Have we a holy ambition to be such ~~men and women as~~ that it shall be possible for God to trust us? We think of our loving God. Do we ever think of His loving us? We think of God's giving us pleasure. Do we ever think of our giving Him pleasure? And yet our blessed Lord indicates that if the door is opened to Him, and He comes in to a soul that has hitherto excluded Him, He is going to bring a blessing and to get blessing; He is going to confer good and to receive it; He is going to impart joy, and His own divine heart is going to get a thrill of joy from the obedience, and the confidence, and the communion of the willing soul.

Now let us look, in conclusion, at the way in which Christ gets inside, and at the marvellous change that takes place.

Just two things. "If any man hear My voice and will open the door." Now, is there a child that does not

understand what that means? You are inside a closed door, and somebody else is outside. You hear a knock; you hear a call; you go and listen. The knock is repeated, and the voice utters a name, the name of him who is knocking, and the name of you who are inside. You turn the key, withdraw the bolt, and turn the knob. You open the door: "Friend, enter." Anybody understands what that means. Hearing means attending to the voice; and opening the door means responding with the will. And so I say to those who are enquiring the way to Christ, there is no need for enquiring any more, for it is perfectly simple. Have you heard the invitation of the gospel? Then, the first condition is fulfilled—"If any man hear My voice." Are you ready to open? Do you choose Christ as your Saviour? Do you say, "Lord, come in, Thou blessed One, and occupy my whole being. I no more reject Thee and rebel against Thee and repel Thy presence. I gladly welcome Thee"? Then, the second condition is fulfilled: you open the door. Why, that is so simple that I am afraid of making it obscure by saying anything more about it.

But I want to add this. It is a very important thing that we should understand—and I never like to obscure this fact—that the Lord Jesus Christ never enters a house without taking possession of it. Sometimes, when a guest comes to our house, we open the guest-chamber and the drawing-room and the dining-room, but the rest of the house is shut. We should not like to have it explored. It is not quite in order, and we do not like our guests to go where they are not asked to go. But when the Lord Jesus Christ comes in, if He comes at all, the whole house is His. There is a provision in law in America that in the exchange of property in real estate—a house, for instance—to retain one single apartment, though it is nothing but a cupboard or a pantry or a

wardrobe in that house, vitiates the deed of transfer. In America such an act of transfer would not stand one single hour. If you say, "I transfer to A or B this entire piece of property, only reserving to myself this cupboard under the stairs," the law would show that it is no transfer. The whole property must go, or you cannot transfer the house at all, for if you retain that cupboard under the stairs you retain the right to get to it, and go to and fro to put what you will in it and take what you will out of it. That implies a passage way through the house, and the right to come in at the door, and come in when you please. That is no kind of transfer.

There are a great many people that pretend to open their hearts to Jesus Christ, but who have got a locked cupboard somewhere. They are willing that He should come into the drawing-room, especially if it is cleaned up and made all nice and beautiful. They are willing that He should go into the guest-chamber and tarry. They are willing that He should come into the dining-room, especially if He sets the table Himself with His own dainties. But they would like to have the rest of the house locked up. There are some idols there that they do not want Him to see. There are some bad thoughts that they do not want Him to explore. There are some hoarded treasures of sin there which they do not want to have cast out. And so, as my dear friend Mr. Meyer once said, "When the Lord comes into a house, and finds that a part of it is shut against Him, He walks out again with a sad look, and, perhaps, with a tear in His eye." Christ considers that if you hold back any part of yourself from Him you have not surrendered anything to Him. If you let Him in on a Sunday, and exclude Him during the week, you have not let Him in at all. If you let Him in by day, and exclude Him by night, you have not let Him in at

all. If you let Him in during a day of fasting and prayer, and in a day of business exclude Him, there has been no real entrance. He wants the whole man, or none of it. "I would thou wert cold or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm, I will spue thee out of My mouth."

I wish that I could tell you what a blessed thing it is just to be wholly the Lord's. There never comes any comfort to a human soul until Christ takes entire possession. When He takes the candle of the law, and goes with you through the house, and opens every locked cupboard, every place, every room, large or small, and when the house becomes cleaner from top to bottom, so that there is nothing whatever in it that He does not understand, and nothing whatsoever in it that you would, for a moment, hide from Him; when you can say with the Psalmist, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me and I shall be whiter than snow: try me, O God, and know my heart: prove me and know my thought: see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting"; when you come where you would not have a thought that you would hide from Christ, or an affection that you would not have to centre about Him, or a resolution that you would not have twined about Him, or a conscientious judgment that you would not have according to His will, or a purpose or a plan which He is not in the midst of, and of which He is not the inspiration; then, indeed, you have thrown the door open to Christ and He is inside.

Is not that very simple? Now, this precious truth demands immediate action. You hear His voice, do you not? Is your hand on the lock? You have the key. He will not force an entrance. He never comes into a human soul where the obstacles to His coming are not

removed, and where He does not get a warm welcome. When He comes you may have been like Saul of Tarsus up to that moment, fighting against God, and shutting and locking and bolting the doors of your heart, lest the Son of God should come in. It makes no difference. If you now hear His voice, and turn the key in the lock, and turn the knob, and fling open the door, and say in penitence and faith, "My Lord and my God, come in and take possession : there shall be nothing withholden from Thee," it will not be a moment before He is inside. It takes but an instant for a man to pass from without to within when the door is open ; and, great as the change is, it can all be accomplished as quickly as I can raise my hand if there is a willing heart, if there is a submissive will, and if there is a real desire for the Lord and Saviour.

Oh, how many times I have been visited by people who are called "enquirers," who say that they do not see how to be reconciled to God : they do not see how to accept Jesus Christ. I think the reason is that people imagine to themselves a great ceremony, something that will be involved and delicate and difficult to manage, something that takes time to manage, something that requires a certain amount of preparation in order to accomplish it. But the Lord says, "I am outside, and you are inside. If you hear My voice and open the door, I will come inside and sup with you, and you shall sup with Me." And if we understand the parable and the picture, it means simply this—that if you, to whom the message of salvation comes, no longer want to exclude Him, but want to admit Him, and will do your part in the opening of the closed door, He will do His part in coming in ; and you will find all the blessings that His coming in involves. But if you shut Him out now—hear this—if you shut Him out now, the time will come when you will

stand at another closed door, as He stands at a closed door now, and, although you knock, although you call, the only answer will be, "Depart from Me," and it will be a terrible thing when the same voice that has said, "Open unto Me, and I will come in and bless you," is compelled to say, "Depart from Me. The door is shut."

XI

The Preacher and His Message

“And as He reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time. When I have a convenient season I will call for thee.”—*Acts* xxiv. 25.

IT is not very often that a sermon is preached to one man; but we have here a scene in court, where, although the wife, Drusilla, was present, and doubtless some of the members of the immediate staff of the governor, a sermon was preached by one of the greatest preachers of history to one of the most profligate and wicked men of history. There are many things about the preacher and the hearer that have such valuable lessons, that we may well spend a few minutes considering them.

First about the preacher. He was a very evangelical preacher; that is to say, he confined his preaching to the gospel. Most court preachers have not preached the gospel very faithfully. They have catered for the tastes of the audience to whom they have spoken, and apologised for royal faults and failings, and, since they were getting their living from the court, they have been in bondage to motives of policy. But here was a prisoner virtually in bonds brought out of his jail to confront a Roman governor, and the first thing we notice about his preaching is that it was upon the subject of faith in Christ. The blessed man who, all through his missionary

journeys, knew nothing but "Jesus Christ and Him crucified," had not exhausted the great theme yet, and he had nothing to bring before Felix, the governor, but the same grand old truth, upon which he had so many times discoursed, Jesus Christ and the blessedness of the faith that is placed upon Him.

And then we notice that this was a logical sermon, for he "reasoned" of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. There are some preachers who are excessively dogmatic. They speak with authority, but not as with God-derived authority. They speak as though they expected everybody to bow before what they think and what they say. Paul had no confidence in his own thoughts or in his own words. He sought, first of all, to get the thought of God, and then put as nearly as might be that which the Holy Ghost taught him. But you will notice that Paul did not forget that in every man's own nature there is something to which to appeal. Why did God give us a reason, why did God give us a conscience, why did He give us a will, if He did not mean that all truth should appeal to our reasoning powers, to our conscience with its moral judgment, and to our will with its grand power of choice? All preaching ought to find in the human soul something with which to grapple. It should be addressed to the instincts of men. It should appeal to their reason, to their moral judgment, to their powers of thought and powers of love. And one of the reasons why no soul can be guiltless before God for rejecting this gospel, is that this gospel appeals to every one of us as to whether it does not bear in itself the marks of being a divine gospel. God does not ask of you a blind faith; but he asks a reasonable faith. He says that every man should be ready to give an answer to those that ask a reason for the hope that is in him. "Come now, let us reason together," saith the Lord. And so

Paul "*reasoned* of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come."

Now, what is righteousness? Righteousness is derived from "right"; and what is right? Right is a mathematical idea lifted to the moral sphere. That is to say, right is a conception taken from the ordinary things of life, like a right angle, like a straight way, and lifted to the moral sphere to apply to a right form of conduct, a righteous style of character. What is temperance? Temperance is self-control. Temperance is keeping in subjection the bodily appetites and passions and lusts, and everything with regard to us, to the higher dominion of conscience, of reason, of the truth, and of the Spirit of God. What is the doctrine about a judgment to come but the doctrine that there shall be hereafter, beyond this life, a great assize, a great court of judgment, where the things that have not been rightly adjusted in this world shall be divinely compensated, and where the punishments not meted out for sin in this life shall be properly and judiciously inflicted?

Now, I say that while righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come are all of them plain truths declared in the Word of God, they are truths about which we can reason. That is, they are truths that do not come to us simply with the arbitrary authority of the Word of God. They are not simply founded upon the "say so," even of God; but they are founded also upon the concurrent testimony of our own nature. Take that matter of righteousness. Is there any man living who does not feel convinced, without any special reasoning on the subject, that it is his duty to lead a right life? One of the things that do not need to be proven from any pulpit is that it is the bounden obligation of every man and every woman for the sake of self, for the sake of everybody else, and for the sake of Almighty God, to do just exactly what is right

and to let alone everything that is wrong. You cannot say, and you dare not say, that you have a right to do as you please. You have no right to do what you please unless you please to do what is right. We are not independent of each other. Your actions influence others; your course influences others; your example influences others. We are bound together in society. We are dove-tailed in the great fabric of the State, and of the family, which is only a smaller state. No man has a right to do violence to himself; no man has a right to do violence to his neighbour. You have no right to do that which warps your own character, which injures yourself; nor have you any right to do anything, however slight, that may imperil the virtue, the truthfulness, the uprightness, and the success of your neighbour, so that righteousness, apart entirely from any revelation from God, is a revelation in the soul of man. It is something about which every man can reason apart from revelation, and come to conclusions without any light from God on the subject. The fact is that there are many things in the Word of God which, while they are revelations of truth, are confirmations of what is already revealed in us, and righteousness is one of those great revelations which strike an answering chord in every human soul.

Now, about temperance. Have you any doubt, aside entirely from the testimony of the Word of God, that it is the bounden duty of every man and every woman to keep the lower nature in subordination to the higher nature? Is there any one of you that doubts for a moment that your appetite for food and for drink belongs to your lower nature—that your power to think, your power to love, your power to morally judge, and your power to choose that which is good, belong to a higher realm of your being? Why, you have no more doubt of it than that the cellar of the house is down below

the drawing-room and the dining-room and the guest-chamber—that it belongs, not only in the structure, lowermost, but that it is inferior in quality and importance to the rest. You see, temperance is something about which one can reason. We do not need revelation to show us that we ought to be temperate, that is, self-controlled, keeping the lower parts of our nature in subjection to the higher parts of our nature. And see how the logic leads us. If it is my duty to keep the lower part of my nature in subordination to the higher, then it is my duty to keep the whole of my nature, higher and lower alike, under the control of the divine nature, which is still higher even than my spiritual life.

How about a judgment to come? Do we need a revelation from God to us to show that there is a judgment to come? I do not think we do. You all know that if there is a God He must properly sustain His own law. Now the sanctions of law, so-called, are the reward of obedience on the one side, and the punishment of evil on the other. You all know that all that is good does not get rewarded in this world; and you all know that all that is evil does not get punished in this world. If there is to be a vindication of God as the Moral Governor of this world, there must come some rewards and some punishments beyond this life which we never see bestowed or inflicted here. So, aside from revelation, the judgment to come is something about which we can reason. See how simple the reasoning is. A just God will reward obedience and punish disobedience. That is the first proposition. Secondly, it is perfectly plain that a just God does not always punish disobedience, and does not always reward virtue in this world. What is the conclusion? Therefore a just God has another court of judgment and another realm of retribution beyond this world. That is the reasoning about a judgment to come, and it

is reasoning that no man or woman in the possession of the senses and of the reason and conscience can for one moment deny. I suppose that in some such way as that, Paul, instead of placing all that he had to say upon some declaration of Holy Scripture, some word of God, put it to Felix as he preached before him in prison, whether the doctrine of righteousness and of temperance, and of judgment to come, did not find an answering signal in his own bosom. Why, it is impossible to preach such a truth as that in any place without an echo coming from every man and woman.

Now notice that, in the next place, Paul preached a very personal and very practical sermon. There are some sermons that rebuke the sins that existed a hundred and fifty years ago, and they are very safe, for they do not touch anybody in this present age particularly. The kind of preaching that the world needs to-day is preaching about present sin; preaching that touches man's conscience with regard to his own guilt. That is exactly what Paul did. Whom did he have before him? A Roman libertine and a Jewish Cleopatra, a man that lived in the violation of his own conscience every day, a man that stultified his own reason, a man that was under the control of his own lusts, and a woman that shared with him the iniquity of his imperial life. See how Paul ventured to attack that same callous governor with regard to the practical sins of his own life. He reasoned of righteousness; he reasoned of temperance; he reasoned of judgment to come. Do you want to see what ground he had for preaching a sermon on these three topics? See what we are told here about Felix, even if we knew nothing else about him. "As he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, 'Go thy way for this time. When I have a convenient season I will call for thee.' "

There is the sin of procrastination, putting off a duty to another time. That is one of the first forms of unrighteousness. Righteousness, the moment that it beholds a law of right, conforms to it. The moment that it recognises a call of God, it heeds it. The moment that it sees the finger of God, it obeys the divine beck. The moment it hears the voice of conscience, it surrenders to the authority of the moral sense. The man to whom Paul reasoned of righteousness shows himself an unrighteous man, because, when trembling with the consciousness of his own guilt under Paul's showing of duty, he said, "Go thy way for this time." He would not yield prompt obedience to the voice of his own conscience, and of the truth and of the Spirit of God.

Now read the next verse: "He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul that he might loose him; therefore he sent for him the oftener and communed with him." Think of that. Here is a demagogue, a leader of the people. Here is a man who holds the position of a governor, bound to hold the scales of even-handed justice and administer righteousness in the name of the Most High; and yet when he knows that Paul is a prisoner without guilt, and that there is no cause of death in him and no cause of bondage, he keeps him in jail, and sends for him from time to time to talk with him in hope that Paul will yield to his avarice and satisfy his greed by offering a ransom for his release. Does not that man need to have temperance preached to him? What is temperance? Subjecting the lusts to reason and conscience. Here is a lust of sensuality, of which that man was guilty; here is a lust of avarice of which he was guilty, and the proof that he needed a sermon on temperance is shown in the very fact that greed led him to send for Paul in hopes that he would get a ransom offered

for his release. Read the next verse: "But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix's room," as governor, "and Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound." He wanted to curry favour with the Jews so that he might, perhaps through their hands, get another position under the Roman government by getting a favourable report to the Roman emperor with respect to his administration; and so trying in this way to propitiate the Jews from motives of policy, he left Paul in bonds after two years of imprisonment, when, as the governor, he had no reason to believe that there was any fault in that man that justified incarceration. Did not that man need to have a judgment to come preached to him? Why, there he was, a judge perverting judgment. There he was, a man sworn to administer the law in the name of justice, and with high-handed injustice and oppression he was keeping a man in bonds, simply because it was a matter of policy to propitiate the Jews and gain their good opinion.

Now notice, in the next place, with regard to this evangelical sermon, this logical sermon, this personal sermon, this practical sermon, what a grandly courageous sermon it was. There was a man in bonds; there was a man before him that might release him. Had he spoken in such terms as to get the good opinion of Felix by flattering him for his so-called virtues, and screening him from the accusation of his own vices, he might have been turned loose. But in the fear of God, and not of man, a prisoner in bonds, and going to Rome to be tried for his life, he ventured to stand before that man and preach to him one of the most practical, one of the most pointed, and one of the most searching sermons ever delivered in the Christian dispensation. I have a sort of admiration for courageous bravery that amounts to little short of adoration. I think that if there is any Divine attri-

bute in a godly man, it is absolute allegiance to the truth. I have a great admiration for such men as Curran, who, in his defence of Bond, when round about him in the very audience-chamber where he was delivering that great address, he heard the clattering of the arms of antagonists and assassins that were there to deprive him of his courage, he turned round and said to them, "You may assassinate me, but you cannot intimidate me." Paul virtually said to this Roman governor, "You may take off my head, but you cannot take out of me my courage."

Brave soul. We have very few brave souls in the world to-day in comparison with the great mass of men. Why, there are newspapers that can be sold from Saturday night to Monday night to take any side that is expedient in the interests of policy. The best talent of Europe to-day is for sale in the market for or against despotism. There are men in governing positions to-day that were lifted from the position of plebians to the position of patricians by buying of titles of nobility to get their influence. These things are common in all lands, and even in Christian lands. There is some purchasable and infamous scoundrel in high places who has round about him a military or a political glory, and you have only to pierce the halo of his fame to find how rotten is his moral character. And it is an awful pity and shame that into the pulpit where, above all things, truth should stand absolutely enthroned and enshrined, and men should dare to be loyal to God, and their conscience, and their fellow-men—it is an awful pity that in some pulpits of Christendom there is a covering over of the most awful truths because they are not altogether tasteful to the natural mind. But blessed be God for such a man as Paul, who dared to face such a man as Felix, and reason to him about righteousness, and temperance, and judgment to come.

I want you to now notice how powerful that sermon was. "Felix trembled." There was a kind of reversal of positions there. Felix was nominally a judge, and Paul was nominally a culprit. The fact is that Felix was the culprit, and Paul was the judge; and the culprit trembled on his throne before the prisoner that came from a jail, and very possibly came in chains. Great, indeed, is the power of spiritual truth and spiritual uprightness. It makes a man mighty to speak before kings and not be ashamed. And great is the power of sin, and falsehood, and corruption, and moral rottenness to make a king tremble on his throne before a prisoner in bonds. It was a mighty sermon; but I want you to remember that it was not the might of the man who preached it that made that sermon powerful. It was the truth which he preached, and it was the inward conscious corruption of the man to whom he was preaching. You have seen a dog in the street take up a rat and shake him until he shook the life out of him. You have seen one animal tear in pieces and devour another. Truth can take hold of you with the strong grip of the consciousness of its own mightiness, and shake you until you tremble like an aspen leaf; until, as it were, you are torn limb from limb. The man that dares to make his conscience his enemy has in his own soul the foundations of hell. The man that has got a falsehood underneath his life is the man that is in constant terror of the demon to whom he has given admission to his own soul.

I know a man in America who is occupying a high position in the State. I happen to know that in that man's life there is an awful moral rottenness. It is not a thing commonly known, but it is there, and that man stands in mortal terror that to-morrow morning may possibly bring to the knowledge of the community the fact of that awful moral transgres-

sion of the past that he has tried in every way to cover over from the sight of man and the sight of God. It is an awful thing to have down beneath your feet a smoking volcanic crater, though there may be a thin covering of cool lava above it on which you venture to place your timid feet. And there are men, and there are women, without doubt in every country, who have just such a smoking crater underneath their feet, and the heat of that fire blisters their feet as they stand on the thin covering of lava. Now, if you are not at ease with yourself, how about God? If you cannot stand yourself up before yourself, and hold communion with yourself, what are you going to do when you stand before God? If conscience makes you tremble, and holds you in her awful grasp, and shakes you with the fury of a madman, what are you going to do when, in the calmness of the great white throne, God's eyes look upon you and pierce "to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, joints and marrow," and you feel as though the very thoughts and intents of your heart were unrolled in a panorama before the assembled universe to be looked upon by them?

In one of the American cities a murderer was taken up by the officers of the law. They put him in gaol over night, until proper steps could be taken for his trial, and there was very insignificant evidence to fix guilt upon him—nothing but circumstantial evidence. Possibly he could never have been convicted in an American Court, or even in an English Court, on that slender basis of circumstances. But the next morning he was found dead. He had hung himself by his own suspenders to a hook in the wall. He could not stand a night with his own conscience without suicide. I want you to be delivered from the dominion of your own consciousness of guilt. It is not God that is your enemy only. While you are under the curse of sin, you are your own enemy. It is

not only hell that threatens to engulf you. You have got a hell inside. It is not the law of God only that is held over you like a sword on a single hair. The sword of your own convictions is piercing your own soul while you are in solitude.

Now, we have seen what Paul, the great preacher, did. I want, finally, to see what Felix, the governor, did. He said, "Go thy way for this time." Men come very near salvation and miss it. There was a godless man sitting on the throne, with the impious partner of his crimes beside him. There was a humble culprit by law, though innocent in the eye of God, reasoning about righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, and holding up the Christ as the fulfilment of God's righteous claims, as the bestower of the Holy Spirit, through whom the chief control comes into the upper parts of a man's being to hold the lower parts in subjection, and by whose grace we are delivered from the fear of judgment to come. Paul undoubtedly pressed Jesus Christ on Felix that day. He undoubtedly besought him to find a refuge in Christ for his unrighteousness, a hope in Christ for a temperate restraint of evil passions and lusts, and deliverance from his accountability to God. I suppose that Felix might have found Christ that day and been a saved man. When he was trembling under the sense of guilt, his trembling might have been changed to assurance if it had led him into penitence and he had gone from penitence to faith. But he said, "Go away for this time." He put off conviction. He refused obedience to conscience. He postponed salvation, and, so far as we know, the convenient day never came. The story of Felix's subsequent life, as far as it is given to us in history, is the story of continued vice, sensuality, moral enormity, and crime. He went down to his grave unsaved and unblessed. He came so near salvation that an abandonment of his sin and an

acceptance of the Saviour would probably have made him that very day a companion of Paul as a professed believer in Christ; but he said, "Go thy way. When I have a convenient season I will call for thee."

No sinner ever finds a convenient season. That is my deep conviction. What is a convenient season? A season when it will be agreeable or easy to turn to God. In the nature of the case, it is never easy to abandon sin, never easy to turn from evil to good, never a convenient time to revolutionise life. If you want a convenient season, it is your most convenient season now. You never will find another that will be as convenient as this, for every day's postponement fixes the grasp of sin on your life. Every day's postponement accumulates the guilt of sin in your heart. Every day's postponement alienates the Spirit of God from your own soul. Every day's postponement is the treasuring up of wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. And, therefore, when the message of salvation comes to a human soul, that is the time for choice. And, however Satan may seek to make you believe that another time is more convenient, his suggestion is a snare. The present time is the best time, because it is the nearest time to the appeal, and because it is the time when Satan has the least hold upon you; and all waiting for future opportunities is, therefore, an imperilment of the final issue.

Once, in a vast audience in an opera house in Detroit, I used what I have sometimes called a visible demonstration of the danger of postponement. I had a large audience, mostly of the unsaved, gathered before me, but perhaps one-third or one-half of the people were confessing disciples of Christ. I wanted to demonstrate that there was danger in delay, and first I asked all persons in the house who had been converted to Christ after

the age of sixty years to rise. Two men and one woman rose. I then asked how many persons in the house had been converted after the age of fifty years; and, according to my best recollection, there were perhaps twelve or thirteen in the whole house. Then I asked how many had been converted after the age of forty years. There were, perhaps, fifty or sixty or seventy. But when I came down to the last question, "How many in this house were brought to Christ after the age of fifteen, but inside of twenty-five?" the great bulk of the Christian portion of that audience rose to their feet, showing me in a most tremendously convincing and startling form, and showing to the audience likewise, that every day's postponement of salvation risked in a geometrical ratio the possibility of final rescue.

There is nothing that makes me feel more solemn in thinking of these things, than the moral certainty that the great bulk of the unsaved turn a deaf ear to the Gospel, with the desire to continue in a life of sin. It requires a mighty outpouring of the Spirit of God in converting power to arrest the unsaved. They have been so long continuing in sin, and it has been so habitual to them to say, "Go thy way for this time," and they have been so long looking for a more convenient season, that the fact is that they are getting confirmed in evil, and the Spirit of God is likely to be banished from them entirely by their persistence in evil. There are young men who can remember when they uttered the first oath. Perhaps it startled and frightened them at the time, but now it may be that their conversation is habitually interlarded with profanity. There are those who shuddered at the first thought of a life of voluntary impurity, or the sacrifice of chastity, or virtue, or truth, or honesty, and yet who, to-day, are going along in a career of increasing wickedness and departure from God.

And it may be that some who have not these flagrant forms of sin have heard over and over again the gospel proclaimed as with celestial tenderness and winsomeness and have been saying all through these years, "Go thy way for this time," and perhaps they feel less concerned about their souls now than at any previous time when they heard a gospel message. I have no power to help you, save to urge upon you the acceptance of Christ; but, affectionately and tenderly, and with my deepest soul, I proclaim to you your need of righteousness and temperance, and the certainty of your account at the judgment to come, and I pray you now do not postpone; do not procrastinate. Take Christ as your righteousness. Seek from the Spirit the renewal of your heart and the power of a gracious control over your lower nature, and by taking refuge in your precious Redeemer say, even to the great white throne, "I have no fear of Thee, for I shall never enter into judgment."

XII

The Isolated Name

“Neither is there salvation in any other ; for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved.”—*Acts* iv. 12.

HISTORY is the illustration of truth, and especially the history that is recorded in the Word of God. We cannot separate this verse from the story of healing which precedes it without losing God's own illustration of the truth in these words. The whole narrative, from the beginning of the third chapter to this point, throws light upon the grand expression of the text. Peter and John went up to the temple about the hour of prayer, the ninth hour, and at the Beautiful Gate of the temple there was a certain man which was daily laid there, that as the throngs moved to and fro he might receive from them their alms. And as Peter and John passed by he looked in a supplicating way to them that he might receive from them a gift of money. Peter, with his companion, John, fastening his eyes on him, said: “Look on us”—as much as to say, “Do we look as though we were able to bestow upon you worldly gifts. We ourselves are disciples of the hated Nazarene. Silver and gold have we none, but such as we have we give thee.” Then came that blessed word of healing, “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and

walk." And they took him by the hand and lifted him up; and as he stood on his feet God gave his feet and ankle bones strength; and he walked and even leaped, and entered with them into the temple, walking and leaping and praising God. And the people to whom he was a very familiar sight, like any other chronic beggar, were marvelling; and they gathered round Peter and John; and the crowd drew the rulers of the synagogue, and the question was raised, "By what power, or by what name, has this been done?" They could not dispute the miracle, for there stood the man healed; but they diverted attention from the miracle by asking the question, "How has this been done?" Then Peter explained that it was by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom they had crucified and slain. "Even by that name does this man stand before you whole."

If you will read the third and fourth chapters, you will find that there is scarcely a verse in which some reference is not made to this act of healing, and the verse which we have before us is the conclusion of this great discourse in which all eyes were turned from the healed man to the healing Saviour.

Peter says: "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, but is become the head of the corner." There is a tradition that when the temple was building there was a stone brought from the quarry and laid on the temple platform, and marked for the corner-stone; and it is said that there was in the stone a red line which ran through it, and which, in the eyes of the builders, indicated a defect; and so they said, "This stone will not answer for the corner-stone," and they set it on one side. But when the master builder came, he said, "The stone which you have set at nought is God's chosen corner-stone." The tradition may be true, or may not be true, but it expresses a thought. They set at nought

the very corner-stone that God had ordained to be the foundation of His Church. And now, says Peter, "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is, under the whole heaven, no other name given among men whereby it is necessary that we should be saved." The word "must" expresses the necessity. There is no salvation in any other, and if you are going to be saved at all, it is absolutely necessary that you should be saved by that name.

Such is the natural introduction which the text has in the narrative, and I cannot conceal from myself—and I think that you will not be able to conceal from yourselves—the conviction that salvation here is intended to be illustrated by the blessing that came to this cripple. All along through this narrative we find references to this healing. For instance, in the 16th verse of the 3rd chapter we read, "And His name through faith in His name hath made this man strong whom ye see and know. Yea, the faith which is by Him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all." Then, in the 26th verse: "Unto you first, God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." And then in the text and in the previous verses—for instance, the 9th verse of the 4th chapter—"If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole, be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand here before you. Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

I believe that in preaching from a text we should be faithful to the line of thought of which that text is a

conclusion; and so I say that Peter here intends to hold up Jesus Christ as the all-sufficient Saviour for sinners, and to illustrate this all-sufficiency by what he did for the impotent man. Consider, this was no ordinary case of disease. This man had never walked. Now, walking is an art. It has to be learnt—learnt with many a stumble—learnt with many a false step and mis-step. How did this man, not only overcome the impotence of his life, but immediately learn the art of walking? What a magnificent illustration of what Jesus Christ can do for a sinner. From his very birth he has been impotent to walk with God. He has not the capacity of holiness, and he does not understand the art of a holy walk. When Jesus Christ, by the power of His name, and by faith in His name, saves a sinner, He gives to that sinner power to do that which he was powerless to do before, not only so, but the moment before. Instantly there comes into a saved soul a power to please God, a power to live unto God, a power to overcome sin, a power to walk in the ways of righteousness, a power to vanquish the devil, which he never knew before; and the instantaneousness of conversion, the immediateness with which we are even conscious that in our spiritual nature we have received the blessing for which we have been seeking from other sources all our lives long, and never have found—that remarkable experience that comes to hundreds and thousands of impotent sinners the moment they believe and trust in a crucified Lord—is an all-sufficient evidence that there is a power in Christ Jesus that is in no human physician, and that there is a merit in His blood that is in no works of our own.

The word “holiness”—what does it mean? Why, it means “whole-ness.” It is but another form of the word “wholeness.” To be holy is to be spiritually in health. To be holy is to be free from spiritual disease. To be

holy is to be free from every spiritual impotence. The Saviour that made that man whole in his body through faith in His name, so that immediately he recovered from a lifelong disease and learnt the art of walking without even the tuition that comes to children when they first begin to use their feet—the same great Saviour that did that for that man's body can do for your soul, says Peter, what that disease and its recovery suggest by way of illustration.

You see the force of the word "salvation" here. Jesus Christ does two things for a believing soul. First, as Peter says in the 26th verse of the 3rd chapter, He turns you away from your iniquities; and, secondly, He enables you to stand before God and man whole. The first represents repentance, and the second represents regeneration. The first represents justification, and the second represents a full and complete salvation. A sinner must give up sin, and a sinner must have power to serve God. A sinner must renounce evil doing, and a sinner must be made capable of well doing. And Jesus Christ at the same instant does both those things for a penitent believer. The man that has been bound hand and foot by sin has his shackles burst. The man that has been lying, as it were, in impotence even at the gate of God's temple, unable to enter into the temple, has great power given him, and he walks and leaps, and praises God, and enters with God's people into His presence.

That is the story of healing, and that is the illustration of healing.

Now, I want to emphasise this one thought—that Jesus Christ is the all-sufficient Saviour. I do not care how long your malady has existed. I do not care how many physicians you have consulted, getting no better but worse. I care not how far you are in extremity and

emergency. The Lord Jesus Christ, if you will touch the hem of His garment, will give you an immediate healing. If you will take hold of His outstretched hand and let Him lift you on your feet, you will find your feet and ankle bones get strength to walk in His service.

Take another figure suggested by the immediately previous words. "The stone that was set at nought of you builders is made the head of the corner." I am well aware that there is a great deal of difficulty attached to the various passages in the Word of God, in the Old and New Testaments, which refer to Christ as the corner-stone. Some of them seem to think of Him as the base-stone of the edifice—that which lies beneath the whole structure; and others seem to refer to Him as not the corner-stone only, but the copestone; or, as we call it, the capstone in the building, when the whole building reaches completeness. This is one of the passages which seem to indicate that the stone is both the corner-stone and the copestone. If you have ever noticed the peculiar form or structure of a pyramid, you will note that the copestone that caps the whole building is itself a little pyramid of precisely the same shape as the whole pyramid is, so that you may take that single stone that crowns the pyramid, and you may find in that the whole pattern of the pyramid.

It seems to me that the Word of God sometimes refers to this great structure of character in Christ, and even in the Church of God, as a great pyramid. Down beneath it, as a foundation, lie Jesus Christ and the apostles, Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone. And then on the top of the pyramid, as the last stone laid, itself the very pattern of the pyramid, Jesus Christ is lifted. There is only one stone that can cap the climax of the pyramid. There is only one stone that leaves no other stone to go beyond it or above it.

There is only one stone which marks absolute completeness to which nothing can be added, and that is the copestone of the pyramid. And now the Lord Jesus Christ, who is represented in this narrative as able to give to sinners wholeness, holiness—who can turn them away from their iniquities, and then give them in their impotence ability and capacity to serve and please God, is represented as building up the soul by lying beneath it as the foundation of its hope, and by crowning it as the consummation of its hope.

Nothing can be said any more to show the all-sufficiency of Christ. Are you a sin-sick soul? He can heal you. Are you a sinner? He can forgive you. Are you bound in the chains of sinful habit? He can release you. Are you impotent to walk with God? He can give you strength and power. Do you not understand the art and science of heavenly walking? He can teach you in one instant more than philosophers can teach you in a thousand years. Do you want to build up a symmetrical and beautiful character that is like unto God? Take Him as the foundation on which you rest, and grow unto Him in all things who is the head-stone, the copestone, the climax of all holy living. That is the thought, and a marvellous thought it is.

Now the Apostle Peter says that in no other is there salvation. I think that you can find the whole substance of this beautiful text in two little phrases. I like to give people a convenient form in which to remember the lessons of Holy Scripture. If you will write over against this text, first, "In Him alone," you will have the first lesson. If you write over against it next, "In Him only," you have the second lesson. "In Him alone," because He alone can save you. I mean He can save you without anybody's help. That is the force of the

word "alone." Take Jesus Christ alone. You need have no assistance from any source, for all-sufficiency is in Him. And, in Jesus only, for there is no one else that can save you but Jesus.

Now Peter says, "This is the only name under heaven given among men." I suppose that indicates that Jesus Christ is the gift of God. He is the only One that has come down from above the heavens to this world beneath the heavens. Heaven was emptied of its glory that earth might be filled with saving power. Heaven gave up the brightest of its ornaments that that ornament might be put as the crown on a believing soul. Heaven gave up the richest of its treasures that a poor and believing sinner might be made infinitely rich. Heaven gave up its great physician that every sin-sick soul might get healing. And so here is the divine gift of God, and when God gives anything it is absolutely a perfect gift. The adaptation of Jesus Christ to the sinner is as perfect as the wisdom of God can make that adaptation. And the history of all these thousands of years has shown that there is absolute fitness between the Saviour and the sinner; that His medicine always reaches the case; that His counsel always covers the disease; that His remedy is always adequate to the cure. And while you may stand aside and say that you do not see any virtue in this great Saviour—that you do not believe in the power of the balm of Gilead to overcome your wounds and heal them, there is never a sinner in all the ages of the world who has made a trial of the hem of His garment and who has not found the virtue going out, and felt conscious that he was healed of his plague.

Now let me sum up all I have to say in one word more. Jesus only, as well as Jesus alone. You remember that there were, centuries ago, about the time of the Lutheran Reformation, as it is called, two very prominent characters

that appeared in history on the continent of Europe. I think that history has never presented a pair of men that suggested greater likenesses and greater contrasts. One was Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, and the other was Luther, the leader of the great Reformation. They were both of them Roman Catholics. Both of them became greatly dissatisfied with their own condition. Both of them were convicted of sin, and both of them felt the necessity of something more than they had ever found in the rites and ceremonies of their religion, and in priestly confessional and absolution, to lead them into harmonious relations with God. But from this point up to which they had been brought by the Spirit of God and their own conscience, and where they stood, as it were, together in their experiences, they parted as men who come to a fork of the road, of whom one goes one way and the other goes another. Loyola determined that what he needed was favour with God, and he said, "I will get favour with God by purity. I will purge my body. I will subject it to fasting, and penance, and privation. I will do this and do that, beyond the measure of the absolute law of God and the demands of the Church, and through my purity I will get God's favour." Luther said, "I am in need of God's favour in order that I may get purity. I will seek the grace of God to be a pure man." And so he learnt that lesson from Habakkuk and Galatians, and Romans and Hebrews, that "the just shall live by his faith," that faith justifies the sinner and brings him into relations with a justifying God. And so while Loyola went forward in his line, seeking God's favour by trying to be in his own strength a pure man, Luther sought the favour of God in Christ that he might by that grace become a pure man.

There the two systems which those men represent divide, and they have gone down in opposite directions

through the paths of these centuries. In the great world of to-day there are just two kinds of people, one kind trying to get God's favour by their own personal improvement, and the other trying to obtain personal improvement by the bestowment of the grace of God. Now the gospel message is surely this—you can never get to be a better man without the grace of God, and that you can never buy God's favour by your good works; that what you need is to give up all attempts to walk in your own strength and get hold of Christ's hand till He lifts you up, and sets you on your feet, and teaches you the holy art of walking. Men want to give up their fooling with themselves and their trifling with their disease, and their running to the world's physicians, and their spending all their money in the attempts to get better. And they want to just get hold of the hem of Christ's garment, and get the virtue out of Christ. Then they will be whole. They need to build on Him and build up to Him. They need to find in Him a corner-stone and keystone. They need to begin with Him and end with Him, and all through the building process look back to the foundation and forward to the consummation in Him.

So, in conclusion, I can say very little more than this. I thank God that there is the little word "only" as well as the little word "alone," so that while I find Jesus Christ in Himself having all-sufficiency, the Word of God shuts me up to Him, so that I need not spend my time in looking anywhere else, since there is no salvation in any other, and it is necessary to be saved by trusting in Him.

When that great man, Sir Joshua Reynolds, delivered, many years ago, in the city of London, a series of addresses or lectures on art, he took four statues that I saw in Florence in 1889, known as night, morning, noon, midnight, the four seasons of the day—the middle of the night, the middle of the day, the dawning of the morning

and the sunset of the evening. Marvellous statues they are. He took those four statues for a whole course of lectures in London, and when he was through he closed in this manner. He said, "And now, gentlemen, I have lectured to you during this entire season, and I beg now, in the close of this lecture, to bring before you one name only, the name of Michael Angelo." If I should preach for 50 years in any pulpit, I might conclude the last of my sermons by saying, "Now I have but one name to present to you, the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth." How many of you believe that there is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved? I am awfully afraid for many of you that you are trying other methods of salvation, and trusting to devices of your own, and that you will never come to the sense that there is no salvation in any other until you strike on the awful rock of the soul's perdition.

No doubt there are many of you that have been to New South Wales, and been in that harbour of Port Jackson, which is the finest harbour in the world. You know that there is only one narrow entrance into that harbour. It is known as the Heads, where the tall cliffs that line the coast strangely open up, and afford a narrow passage for vessels into this capacious and calm haven. So obscure is the entrance to this haven that Captain Cook, in his voyages round the world, passed it and did not see it.

Years ago there was an English captain in charge of the clipper ship, "Duncan Dunbar," and it is said that he made a wager that he would enter the harbour of Port Jackson before midnight of a certain day, and a large amount of money hung upon his fulfilment of his pledge. The last day was at hand, and the vessel was approaching New South Wales. A mist overhung the sea and hid the cliff on the shore; but as he drew nearer to the shore he beheld through his powerful glass

an opening in the cliffs, known as the "Dip," because just there these cliffs descend almost to the sea level; and he said to himself, "That is the entrance to the harbour," and he crowded on all sails that the wind filling the sails might plunge the vessel into the haven through the opening in these rocks. As they moved that way a sailor on the outlook cried out, "Breakers ahead! Breakers ahead." And before the vessel could be reversed she had plunged on the rock. In an hour she was a wreck, one solitary sailor escaping to the shore by what is now known as "Jacob's Ladder," that awkward, red stairway in the cliff. When the morning dawned there was nothing but the wreck of boats floating on the surge. And the news flashed to Sydney that this vessel with 600 souls had gone down.

I solemnly say to men and women out of Christ, that there is no other entrance into heaven's harbour but by Jesus Christ. The devil has his "dips" at points in the shore, but there is only one "head" through which you enter into the haven. If you try to get in any other way you enter into a controversy with the Holy Ghost, and destruction awaits every soul that ventures in any other way, by any other entrance, to get into heaven. "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me," and when you have struck those rocks it will be too late for you to take another course. Hear what Christ says to you to-day. "In Me alone is sufficient salvation. In Me only is any salvation." And I urge you, turn from all other refuge and find in the all-sufficiency of Christ, conversion from your sin, capacity for service of God, foundation for your building, keystone for your building, light and love, and life and salvation, the entrance to the harbour,

Where the wicked cease from troubling,
And the weary are at rest.

XIII

Christ's Secret of Rest

"Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me ; for I am meek and lowly in heart : and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."
—*Matthew xi. 28 to 30.*

IT seems a strange thing that our blessed Lord Jesus Christ should invite a weary and heavy-laden man to get rest by taking upon him a yoke. A yoke is the symbol of burdens borne. We associate it with the oxen in the field, which, taking the yoke upon themselves, draw the plough or heavy load behind them. Yet our blessed Lord, lifting up His eyes and looking on the multitudes who gave evidence even in their faces that they were weary and heavy laden, says : "Come unto Me and I will give you rest. Take upon you My yoke." Yet that paradox and apparent contradiction leads the way into some of the most delightful and beautiful truths of Holy Scripture. Now, I would make a threefold enquiry : First, whom does God invite ? Second, what does He enjoin ? Third, what does He promise ?

I.

Whom does God invite ? The weary and the heavy laden. Now, let us not think that, because these two words are similar they mean the same thing. Weariness

is not the same thing as fatigue. Fatigue implies exertion. Weariness may come upon us without any exertion. Idleness can make us weary, but it can never make us fatigued. We may weary of our pleasures because they lose their power to charm us, and get monotonous and unsatisfying. We may weary of our treasures when we have heaped them up so that we have a million of pounds sterling at our disposal. Xerxes went through the entire run of pleasure, and spent his royal resources on every form of delight known to the sons of men, and then he advertised that he would give a handsome reward to anybody who would invent him a new pleasure that he had not yet found. He was weary of all his indulgences, and he offered a reward for some new pleasure, just like Solomon the king, who undertook to find something in this world that satisfied him, and by and by pronounced them all vanity and vexation of spirit, and said that there was no profit under the sun, simply because he had found that his own soul was too big for this world, and that when a man has the whole world it is still but a trifle; for his soul, which was meant to receive God, is quite too big for this world to fill.

Now, when our Lord said, "Come unto Me all ye that are weary and are heavy laden," He included every sort of unsatisfied soul—the soul that is unsatisfied with pleasure and treasure, with self-indulgence and self-gratification, with idleness and with ease, and the soul that is fatigued by bearing heavy burdens, bearing them too long without even resting a time. I am sure that all who have not known Jesus Christ as a Saviour will come under one of those two classes. They are either among the weary ones, or among the heavy laden ones, and so Jesus speaks to every one of you, and says, "Come unto Me; come unto Me."

II.

Now look at what He enjoins. There are three things :
 "Come unto Me ; take My yoke upon you ; learn of Me."

"Come unto Me." That is personal approach to the Saviour. "Take My yoke." That is the assuming of work for Him. "Learn of Me." That is sitting at His feet that He may teach us by His words and by His example what manner of persons we ought to be. Now, if we briefly look at these three things, we shall come to understand this wonderful text.

"Come unto Me." He represents a finished work. When He died on the cross He completed our atonement. When He rose from the grave He completed our justification ; and all through His life, from beginning to end, He was completing the perfection of obedience for our sins. Now, when He says, "Come unto Me," He means this, that you shall find in Him the pole in which your magnetic needle has its rest, its true attraction. He means that you shall cease from your own works to find in His finished work a satisfaction to the law of God, the expiation of the penalty, and the hope and assurance of everlasting life.

And, mark, you can only find that in a personal Saviour. Observe you cannot find it even in the Word of God without the Christ of God ; you cannot find it in the Church of God without the Christ of God ; you cannot find it in the creed of the Church of God without the Christ of God. If you leave Christ out of the Bible, you have left out the main thing for which the Bible was written. If you leave Christ out of the Church, the Church becomes a mere shell without a kernel, a mere outside without any vitalising life within it. And if you leave Christ out of the creeds they become cold forms of doctrine with the very centre of doctrine wanting.

The Church of God was meant as a telescope through which men shall look at the eternal things, and, above all, at the Sun of Righteousness. The Church of God was meant as a telescope to bring a distant Christ near to the human soul and give a clear view of Jesus Christ; and when men turn to the Church and forget the Christ, they are like men who are examining the outside of the telescope instead of putting their eye to the eye-piece and looking through it at the stars. "Come unto Me; take My finished work; appropriate My complete righteousness; appropriate My sufferings for your sin and My justifying power for your salvation; and let your heart no longer move restlessly from side to side, seeking for something that meets the claims of a broken law and relieves you of the danger and the punishment of sin.

"Take My yoke upon you." What does that mean? A yoke is for two. A yoke unites cattle in bearing one burden or drawing one load. "Take My yoke upon you. Associate yourself with Me in work for God. Stand side by side with Me in bearing divine burdens and drawing loads for the sake of lost humanity. Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart. Get your inspiration for your life from Me, from My teaching and My example; and imitate Me." That is the substance of what our Lord says.

III.

Now, I would turn to another thought which lies beneath all this, and so I only suggest this thought that we may pass over it to a greater thought. The substance of this whole exhortation of Christ is this: "Cessation from your own works." The word in the Greek which is translated "rest" is the very word from which comes the word "pause." To pause is to stop where you are, arrest your steps, and consider. Jesus Christ says,

"Come unto Me, and I will give you rest. Come unto Me, and you shall rest yourselves," and the main idea is the idea of this pausing—this cessation from your own works.

Remember that we are told in the 2nd chapter of Genesis and the 3rd verse, that when God had finished His creative work of preparing this world for the habitation of men, "God did rest from all His works which God created and made." That was the beginning of what is known in the Bible as the Sabbath rest. That consecrated the Sabbath, while as yet there was no sin which had left its awful mark upon Eden and upon the nature of man. And remember now that this Sabbath resting goes before sin. It is the one thing that remains to us from the blessedness of Eden. Now, we are told in the Epistle to the Hebrews that he that hath entered into God's rest also hath ceased from his own work as God did from His. The secret of entering into the true Sabbath rest of God is this—that you cease from your own works, as God did from His. You have been doing something for yourself; you stop doing something for yourself that you may take up the unfinished work of God in which He permits you to take part, namely, the working out of the great salvation of a lost world. Cessation from your own works is the single secret of entering into the rest of God.

Let me give you another passage of Scripture which greatly helps in the understanding of this Sabbatic rest. In the 58th chapter of Isaiah, at the close of the chapter, we read these words: "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words, then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord,

and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Now, you notice that this Sabbath law lies midway between Moses and Christ. It is a kind of half-way house between the Old Testament Sabbath and the New Testament Sabbath. You observe that all the features that were purely ceremonial have been refined away. All the little directions and rules that cumbered the Sabbath keeping of the Jews have disappeared; and there is a kind of anticipation here of what the Sabbath is to be, or was to be when Isaiah wrote these words, when Jesus Christ should fulfil the Levitical law, and the ceremonial features of it should pass away, and only that which cannot be shaken, which is intended to be permanent, might remain. But now do you not see that in this passage in Isaiah the one thought is the ceasing from your own works? See how emphatic the prophet makes this idea: "If thou turn away thy foot from My Sabbath"—if you do not profane My Sabbath by walking heedlessly, carelessly, within the paling that separates one day from the other six—"if thou turn away thy foot from My Sabbath from doing thy pleasure on My holy day, and shalt honour the Lord, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words, then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord." What is that but ceasing from your own works? You stop doing your own ways; you stop seeking your own pleasure; you stop even speaking your own words; and you try to follow the ways of God and to find pleasure in His worship, and to take up His work and to have your mouth the means of uttering the words that God shall teach.

Now, do you not see that the whole thought of Isaiah is ceasing from your own works? What does that mean? It is a most precious thought.

The essence of sin is that sin centres in self instead of God. It tries to find satisfaction in the centre that is within us rather than in the centre that is without us. We trust ourselves instead of trusting His finished work. We try to help ourselves instead of throwing our burden of sin and care and sorrow upon the great Sin-bearer and the Man of Sorrows, who was acquainted with grief. Now, when we come to Christ, we abandon all this self-help, and ask Him to be our helper; we abandon all this self-trust and lean on His finished work; we abandon all this self-will, and give up our will unto Him, our Master and our Lord. We take His will to be our will, and henceforth the prayer of our hearts is, "Thy will, not my will, be done." We abandon our self-seeking and our self-glorifying. We stop labouring to build up our own interests, and we are taken up with the interests of His kingdom. We stop seeking glory to ourselves, and we undertake to glorify Him. We stop seeking advantage for ourselves, and think of the profit of many souls that may be led to Jesus Christ and built up in their holy faith through our instrumentality. And I pray you to regard this word of the living God. You shall never find rest until you find rest in ceasing from your own works, as God did from His, and entering into Sabbatism, the Sabbath of rest that remains for the people of God, in this way.

Now, this thought I desire to illustrate that I may enforce it.

Our blessed Lord, in order to make this more perfectly obvious to us, says, "Learn of Me"; and observe why He tells us to learn of Him. He says, "I am meek and lowly of heart." What do these two words mean? The word "meek" carries the idea of mildness and gentleness and the absence of self-vindication, and retaliation of injury, and so it carries with it the conception of

unselfishness ; and that is the general meaning of the word "meek " throughout the Holy Scriptures. The meek "inherit the earth " by and by, because they have never sought anything for themselves ; and God always gives the most to those who seek nothing for themselves. Moses was meek, not because he was not a man that was easily angered or violently angry at times, but because he was an unselfish man, and was willing to be dropped out of the book of life himself that he might save his people from their sins. And so Jesus says, "I am lowly in heart." What is it to be lowly in heart? Why, the proud man is high-minded. The humble man is lowly-minded. The selfish man is on an exalted height, where he looks at personal advantage, and interest, and profit. The lowly-minded man is down in a humble sphere, where he is content if he can only serve. Now, our blessed Lord teaches us again, "Cease from your own works. Stop vindicating yourself. Stop retaliating injuries. Stop looking after your own personal interests, and leave yourselves in the hands of God. Be unselfish. Stop your self-seeking, your self-glorifying, your self-boasting, and get down into a lowly place where you will be ready to serve God and serve humanity out of sight of men, if you may only be, however little in the sight of God, the means of good to other souls. Do you not see that the one idea is that you cease from your own works—that you stop helping yourself, working for yourself, willing for yourself, and aiming after your own advantage, and just come where you forget yourself and lose yourself in your Master and Lord?

Now, have you never noticed that the holiest men and the most useful women have been the men and the women who have thus lost sight of themselves? Did you ever read the story of David Livingstone going from Scotland into South Africa, penetrating into the interior

of Equatoria, forty times burnt in the furnace of African fever, for eighteen months or two years away from family and home, and even without a letter from Europe, losing his medicine-chest, wandering among the savage tribes of the interior—one man alone, and the only white man in all those parts; and yet hear him solemnly say, “I never made a sacrifice for my Lord.” He had had such abundant compensation that he forgot that he had lost himself in Jesus—that he had ceased from his own works to do God’s work, and he felt as though he never had made a sacrifice, so grandly and wonderfully had he been compensated. And that hero whom we all delight to honour, who perished down in the Soudan, Charles George Gordon—what a marvellously self-forgetful man he was! He put the rules of his life before him as follows: First, always to do the will of God; second, always to avoid all pretension; third, always to be self-forgetful; and fourth, never to follow, as a motive, the praise or the disapproval of the world; and that grand and heroic man followed out those four rules of conduct perhaps with as much singleness of aim and as much absolute devotion as any man since the days of the Apostle Paul. It is marvellous how he learnt even to hate to be talked about. He disliked decorations; he could not bear lionizing. He disliked even public gatherings that were held in his honour, however sincerely on the part of his friends. He would not accept money. He flung it from him as though it were a bribe. On one occasion, after he had suppressed the Taiping rebellion, the Regent, a Royal Prince, came to Sir Frederick Bruce, the British ambassador, and said to him, “We do not know what to do with this man. He will not receive money. We have given him all the rewards that we are able to offer him, and put upon him all the honours that we can possibly proffer, and he values them not at all. Now, will

not you ask your Queen Victoria if, on his return home, she will not give him something that possibly he would value?" It was just as much out of the power of that gracious Queen to give him anything that he would value as it was out of the power of the Emperor of China, simply because, like Joan of Arc, and others who belonged to that exalted society, he had not merely renounced these things, but he was in an atmosphere where he did not care for them even enough to renounce them. And it is most remarkable that when the story of the Taiping rebellion was written, in which, as we know, he was the great hero, and he was permitted to look over the manuscript before it was printed, he saw several pages which applauded him and praised him as the hero of that great war, he simply tore those pages out of the manuscript and threw them into the fire, and, as the author said, spoiled his book. There was one thing that he did seem to value, and that was the gold medal given by the Emperor of China, and which had upon it a grateful and honourable superscription. Somehow or other that medal disappeared, and afterwards it was found that he had first erased the inscription, and then, in the time of the famine in Manchester, sent that gold medal to Canon Miller, that the proceeds of its sale might be applied to the relief of the hungry and starving poor. Oh, what rest does a man find who ceases from his own works, who has stopped glorifying himself, whom the ambitions of this world can no longer win, over whom the appetites of the flesh have no longer domination, and in whom avarice has long since lost its power to grapple with his soul.

Now, do you think that this is all a high and ideal philosophy? Not at all. I want to ask you whether you do not find unrest in the very things in which you are seeking rest? Take avarice. Will you tell me any-

thing that makes a man more restlessly unhappy than becoming the victim of the greed of gain? He gets a little property, but he wants more. He gets a little more. He wants still more. Avarice, like the horse-leech's daughters, cries, "Give, give, give, give"—never satisfied. It never has enough. Like the grave, it is always open for some new victim. The heart of the greedy man is always reaching out after some new accumulation of treasure, and you can never give him so much as that he is satisfied.

How is it with the ambitious man? A little higher. When he gets there, that is only the stepping-stone to higher elevations. A little higher. When he gets there, still a little higher; and if, like Alexander, he could stand with his foot on the topmost pinnacle, and look on a world that was conquered and laid at his feet, he would still sigh for another world to conquer, or for other worlds to conquer, as the historian makes Alexander to sigh at the height of his conquest.

Did you ever find any satisfaction in your appetite? Does it not clamour after new indulgence all the time? Do you not find that the more you suffer yourself to become a glutton the more gluttony ensnares? Do you not find that the more you indulge in intoxicating drink the more loudly intoxicating drink appeals for the satisfaction and gratification which never can come to that morbid appetite? Have you never noticed the fact that men that give themselves up to the gratification of their lusts and passions in a life of impurity, after they have burned out their own lusts by their indulgence, have still such an unsatisfied craving that they become the pamperers and the procurers for the passions of others after their own passions have ceased to burn? The whole history of the world shows us that never man nor woman finds rest in the sources of rest to which most of

us turn, and all of us turn in a life of sin, and that the men and women who have found the sublimest Sabbath rest on earth have been the men and women that have ceased from their own works, and ceased from their own will, and ceased from their own pleasure, and ceased from their own glory, and rested in the finished work of Christ and taken up the unfinished work of God in a world's redemption, and have, in the help of Christ, found their strength, and in the glory of God found their object, and in the intensest and most self-sacrificing devotion to God found the intensest and most abundant satisfaction to their own souls? I often read that hymn of Faber, which is so well-beloved among the people of God. You remember how he sings :

I worship Thee, sweet Will of God,
And all Thy ways adore,
And every day I live I seem
To love Thee more and more.

I love to kiss each print where Christ
Did set His pilgrim feet ;
Nor can I fear that blessed path,
Whose traces are so sweet.

When obstacles and trials seem
Like prison walls to be,
I do the little I can do,
And leave the rest to Thee.

I have no cares, O blessed Lord,
For all my cares are Thine ;
I live in triumph, too, for Thou
Hast made Thy triumphs mine.

Ill that He blesses is our good,
And unblessed good is ill ;
And all is right that seems most wrong,
If it be His sweet Will,

He only wins who sides with God,
To whom no chance is lost ;
His Will is sweetest to him when
It triumphs at his cost.

Lead on ! lead on triumphantly,
O blessed Lord, lead on ;
Faith's pilgrim-sons behind Thee seek,
The road that Thou hast gone.

It took a high Christian experience to write such a hymn as that. That man had to know what it was to lose himself in God, who could say :

Thy Will is sweetest to me when
It triumphs at my cost—

when I learn to love God so, and to trust God's will, so that even when it crosses my will, and when it defeats my inclinations, I can rejoice in the failure more than I can rejoice in the success of my own plans. I want to tell you a brief story about a hymn which, although not so well known, is one of the highest triumphs of a Christian soul. You remember that it is the hymn—

My Jesus, as Thou wilt :
Oh, let Thy Will be mine.

Now, you never can appreciate that hymn unless you know the story of it. Schmolke, the writer, was a German pastor. If I remember rightly the circumstances, there was first a great conflagration, which swept over his entire parish and burned the houses of most of his people, and burned his own church, if not his own parsonage. Then death came into his family and took away his wife and his daughter. Then paralysis struck him and laid him on his bed, so that he could not move; and blindness crept over his eyes, and there, his parish being burned down, his wife and daughter taken from him, himself blind and paralysed, he wrote these words :

My Jesus, as Thou wilt,
Oh, let Thy Will be mine,
Into Thy hand of love
My all I now resign.
Through sorrow or through joy,
Conduct me as Thine own,
And help my soul to say, my Lord,
Thy Will be done.

My Jesus, as Thou wilt,
Though seen through many a tear,
Let not my star of hope
Grow dim, or disappear
Since Thou so oft hast wept
And sorrowed all alone,
If I must weep with Thee, my Lord,
Thy Will be done.

My Jesus, as Thou wilt,
All shall be well with me ;
Each changing future scene
I gladly trust to Thee.
Straight to my home above
I travel calmly on,
And say in life and death, my Lord,
Thy Will be done.

Think of that man, when he could not see a star in the heaven, praying that his star of hope might not grow dim or disappear ; when he could not move hand or foot, praying that he might be conducted as God's own through each changing future scene, and affirming that he would travel straight on toward the throne of God.

I cannot convince you that there is no rest but in Christ, but you may look all over human history, and you will find that only as men and women have forgotten themselves in Him, and lost their will in His will, and ceased from their own pleasure for the pleasure of God, and stopped their own works that they might do the

works of God, have they ever found joy, peace, rest and satisfaction.

But now I want to notice briefly, in conclusion, that if you cease from your own works you may do God's works, and that is the significance of "Take My yoke upon you." The Lord would not have you cease from your works to do nothing. But you are to associate with Him in blessed labour and in suffering. You remember that the taking of the yoke implies the adoption of Christ as a Master. Oh, that the Church of God could learn, and oh that impenitent wills could learn, the blessedness of the Mastership of Christ, just to have Christ absolute Master, to have Him ruling my thoughts and ruling my life, and ruling my choices, guiding the work of my hands and guiding the walking of my feet, and taking care of every interest of my soul. Mr. Archibald Brown was once telling the story of Nellie, his daughter, that when she was asked how it was she came to go to China, she said before that great audience in the East London Tabernacle: "I thought that I knew something about Jesus as my Saviour; and I thought that I knew something about Jesus as my Friend; and I thought that I knew something about Jesus as my helper. But I was asked, 'Nellie, have you ever known Jesus as your Master?' and I said, 'I am afraid not'; and I went down on my face before Jesus, and I said, 'O Jesus, O Jesus, be my Master'; and Jesus said to me, 'Well, Nellie, if I am to be your Master, go to China.' So I am going to China."

But if it is Mastership, it is also fellowship. The yoke is for two, and you can well afford to take Christ's yoke upon you, because He bears the heaviest end of it. In fact, when you stand with Him beneath the yoke, you feel no burden at all. He bears it all. I remember that when I was a boy I used to go out into the country in

the rural districts of New Jersey in the summer season. I have often seen my uncle there when he was yoking up the oxen. The oxen might be separated far in the pasture field, but he would take the heavy yoke over his shoulder, and then go where the near ox was standing, and he would put the yoke on the neck of the near ox, and then he would stand off and hold up the other end of the yoke. Would the other ox think that he would keep clear of his end of the yoke? Would he not run along as if he was very glad to be associated with his fellow, and put his neck down until the yoke was fastened about his neck? Jesus puts the yoke upon His neck, and then holds up the other end of the yoke, and says, "Take My yoke upon you"; and what a sweet thing it is just to come and bow your head before the Mastership of Christ, and accept the fellowship of Christ in the work which He does for God and for souls.

Did you ever read the story of Ignatius, one of the martyrs of Christ? I remember to have stood in the midst of the Coliseum of Rome many years ago, and I thought of that martyr, as he came out there to be torn in pieces, folding his arms as the fierce Numidian lion advanced from his den, and he was heard to say these words: "I am grain of God. I must be ground between the teeth of lions to make bread for God's people, and in hope that to be crushed between the jaws of a fierce wild beast might be the means of feeding God's people with the martyr spirit, and leading even enemies of God to see that there is a power in the religion of the Nazarene." Ignatius welcomed death in the arena of Rome. There are many of you that are weary and heavy laden. You have been seeking yourselves, and your own glory, and your own advantage. There are some of you that are weary with the seeking of treasure and the enjoyment of pleasures. I pray you come unto Jesus. Come now,

Take His yoke upon you. It is very easy, and His burden is very light. Take Him as your Master; take Him as your fellow in work; and learn to be meek and to be lowly in heart. He will rest you, and you will rest yourself when you come to Him.

XIV

The Inevitable Alternative

“And these shall go into everlasting punishment, but the righteous unto life eternal.”—*Matthew xxv. 46.*

THIS is, without exception, the most unpopular text in the Bible. There is no one text upon which ministers of Christ so infrequently preach, and from which the bulk of hearers so constantly shrink as from this verse. Yet we are bidden to declare the whole counsel of God, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear. And, if for no other reason than this, that the declaration of the entire message of God is the essential condition of freeing our own garments from the blood of lost souls, there is no minister of Christ that ought to preach without at times calling attention to a subject like this.

Now, will you do me the justice to believe that it is with the greatest reluctance that I select this subject, acknowledging that there is connected with it a very awful and profound mystery, but believing also that it constitutes a part of the message, and therefore is essential to a faithful declaration of the message.

Now, in the first place, let me say that every effort has been made to get rid of the disagreeable and the offensive features of this message. We may say that this one verse in the Gospel according to Matthew has

been assailed by more people in the Church and out of the Church, and that it has been the subject of more dispute and determined effort to wrench it out of its obvious meaning, than any other one verse in Scripture, and yet it absolutely refuses to be put away from the Scriptures or explained out of them. It stands there for ever. It is in all the great manuscripts. There is no variation in the reading in different manuscripts. There is no question about the original force of the words that are here employed, and the simple fact is that it is there, and you cannot get rid of it. You may try with your watering-pots to put out the stars, but they will shine on just the same. And all the efforts to get that verse out of the Bible never have succeeded; and until you rend the Bible to pieces and burn it up you can never get it out; and even then it will stay. For example, it has been said that the word translated "eternal" does not mean eternal at all. It is a Greek word, *aionios*. That word is from the Greek word *aion*, which is the same as the English word eon or age; and it has been said that this word means age-long, that it is a punishment that reaches through a definite period, but not necessarily through eternity. But the same word precisely is applied to life in the other section of the verse: "but the righteous unto life eternal." Though the word is translated "everlasting" in the first part of the verse, and "eternal" in the last part of the verse, it is the same original word in both; and if the word means age-long as to punishment, does it not mean age-long as to life? And, if that be the case, then if there is no guarantee in this verse here for the everlasting punishment of the wicked, there is no guarantee here for the everlasting life of the righteous.

But then notice that, while that word does mean age-long, so does the word "eternal." The word "eternal"

is from the Latin word *aetas*, an age, which is the exact correspondent of the Greek word *aion*, an age; so that our word eternal means nothing but age-long. We have to take words to express ideas that are far beyond us. We have to take words that fall within the compass of our experience. We have never known a life that did not end, nor a life in which there was no succession of days and hours, and years and centuries; and so when we try to express the idea of a life that is not bounded by those limits, we take the longest period of which we know anything—an age. We take the most indefinite period of which we know anything—an age; and we use that word to express the conception of eternity. Now, if you will stop a moment you will see the reason of this. Suppose the word that is here translated eternal meant year-long. A year is a definite cycle of time, three hundred and sixty-five days. It marks the period of the revolution of the earth round the sun in its orbit, and so a year means a definite period. But the word “age” means an indefinite length of time, and so we have no word that comes so near to eternity as the word age, for there are no limits to mark the beginning, no limits to mark the end, and that is the characteristic of eternity. It has no beginning, no end; and, because an age has no definite limits this side and no definite limits that side, it is the nearest word we have, coming from our experience, to express eternity. And so the Greek having no other word, said “*aionios*”—age-long, and the Latin, having no other word, compounds one from the word “*aetas*,” age, and we take our word eternal from the same Latin word “*aetas*.”

Then somebody else says, “This does not refer to duration at all, but refers to the quality or sphere of punishment and life. The temporal punishment is that which is administered here. Eternal punishment is that

which is administered there." That might be all true enough, and no doubt is so far as it goes; but how about the life? Does eternal life express only a different quality of life, and has it no reference to duration? Well, then, we have no pledge of immortality beyond the grave. Somebody else says that this word refers, or this whole scene refers, not to the judgment of individuals but to the judgment of nations; that it is nations that are drawn before the throne of God and are there judged, and that this refers, therefore, to the destruction of nations. I am inclined to think that this is, without doubt, the original fact as to this passage; and yet I cannot but believe that there is taught here, as well as in many other passages of the Word of God, the awful doctrine which men will not believe, and which many ministers of Christ will not preach. If this were the only passage where this awful truth is taught we should gladly pass it by as a doubtful passage; but when it is confirmed by many others, what then shall we do? Let me read you three passages of Scripture. First in the Book of Daniel, the 12th chapter, 1st and 2nd verses, especially the second verse: "And many of them which sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Now, you cannot get that out of Daniel; and there is no judgment of nations in Daniel. Then look in the 5th chapter of the Gospel according to John. See our Lord's distinct teaching in this case: "Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." There is no judgment of nations there. The words "eternity" and "everlasting" are not used, but there is a resurrection unto life and a resurrection unto damna-

tion. Then in the 8th chapter of the same Gospel according to John, we have these words (verses 21, 23 and 24): "Then said Jesus again unto them, I go My way, and ye shall seek Me, and shall die in your sins. Whither I go ye cannot come." There is no more solemn statement in the Word of God than that: "Ye shall die in your sins. Whither I go, ye cannot come." There is everlasting separation. "Ye are from beneath; I am from above; ye are of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you that ye shall die in your sins, for if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins." There is plain teaching, and it is so plain that it needs not a word of explanation. "I obey a law of attraction upward, and you obey that of law of attraction downward. If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die with the attraction downward, and you cannot come where I come, for you gravitate to one centre and I gravitate to another."

So much, then, by way of clearing the rubbish out of our path.

Now let us for a few moments solemnly consider this text. "These shall go away unto everlasting punishment, but the righteous unto life eternal."

I shall treat this subject from a different point of view, possibly, from any to which you are accustomed. I am going to regard it, not in the light of Holy Scripture, not in the light of God's decrees, not in the light of God's distinct teachings in the revelation that He has given us in the gospel, but in the light of the revelation of common sense and reason, and conscience and memory, and observation and experience on the part of men.

Now let us be perfectly honest in dealing with this profound and awe-inspiring subject.

In the first place, there are radical differences in the character of men and women in this world. Nobody will

dispute that. These radical differences of character are called "radical" because they reach from the root to the utmost branch. There is a radical difference between an apple tree and a pear tree, and a peach tree and a plum tree, between thorns and thistles, and olive trees and myrtle trees. We know a radical difference to exist between different men and different women. Marked distinctions of character appear on either side of us in the human family. Nobody will dispute that; so I shall not argue that.

My second proposition is that men of different characters follow different kinds of conduct. A man's character determines his course. Whenever he is left free, all things being equal, a man's character will determine his employment. One man will take to one form of employment, and another to another, when they are left free to choose. Certain circumstances will sometimes compel a man to do a work that is distasteful to him, or constrains him to do a work that is not altogether agreeable to him. But if you let men have their own way their conduct will be determined by their character. The nature of their employment will be in sympathy with their tastes and their convictions, with their notions and their affections, and with their resolutions. And so will the character of a man's enjoyments be determined by the character of the man himself. There are some men that will take forms of pleasure to which I would myself feel not in the slightest drawn, or you either; and there are other things to which I should feel drawn in the way of enjoyment that would minister no pleasure to many of my fellow-men. My character determines my enjoyment whenever I am free to pursue my pleasure in my own way.

Again, my character will determine my associations. "Birds of a feather flock together" is an old proverb,

and it is emphatically true among men. If you let men and women have their own way, the like will go together. There will never be a union between like and unlike. So when the Apostles in primitive times were let loose from the presence of the council they went "to their own company"; and that is what every man and woman will do if you let such alone. If you do not restrict by outward restraints, or limits, or laws, every man and woman will seek their own like in society. Now, employment, enjoyment, and association are the three things that determine what we call the course of a man's life; and therefore I think that no one will dispute me when I say that character determines the course of life.

My third proposition is that the character and the course of life make up the condition. When the Chinese proverb says that heaven is a good heart, and hell is a bad heart, the Chinese proverb is very nearly right. No set of conditions can produce happiness. No set of conditions can produce misery, apart from the condition of the character itself. If you will take a forlorn hovel in which there are wretchedness, and want, and woe to-day, and put a godly woman there—a woman of a sunny disposition, a woman of industrious habits, a woman of economy and frugality, a woman who has the love of God and the love of man shed abroad in her own heart, whose very eyes carry the love of God in them, and whose face is lightened with the smile of heaven—put such a woman as that in the midst of such a hovel, and she will make the whole hovel full of sunlight. And you take a palace and put into it a queen that is corrupt, whose imaginations are vile, whose affections are malignant, whose whole disposition is hateful and repulsive, and there will be a shadow over the palace. You cannot make a man's condition radiant with gold or silver or precious stones. And you cannot keep out the light of

joy and happiness by building a hovel with mud walls, even if there be neither windows nor doors. It is character that makes condition. In the long run, men and women are happy or miserable according to what they are, not according to what they have. Wealth never made yet a happy home. Poverty never made yet a miserable home. You must have sin if you want the worst of suffering, and you must have holiness and virtue if you want the highest enjoyment. Nobody will dispute this.

I do not say that condition may not be somewhat affected by our surroundings, but I say that the heart of the man or woman is what settles after all the real condition in this life.

My fourth proposition is this—that, whenever character is fixed beyond reformation, condition is settled beyond change. Here are two men that we may think of to illustrate this. One is passing eastward, and the other is passing westward. They are close together now. They could turn about and shake hands now. There are not twelve inches of space between them as they stand back to back. One begins to walk eastward, and continues to walk eastward. The other begins to walk westward, and continues to walk westward; and so, every step, they get farther apart; and if it were not that the earth was round, and by going eastward and westward they would come together on the other side eventually—if this was a perpetual path towards the east without limit, and this a perpetual path towards the west without limit, and they should continue to go on in these divergent careers, they never would come together. They would stand farther and farther apart every hour, every day, every year, every century, every millennium, through all the boundless succession of eternal cycles.

Character is every day getting more and more fixed in every man and every woman in this world. Why? Because your employments are getting to be habitual, because your enjoyments are getting to be habitual, because your associations are getting to be habitual, because the very notions that you have in your minds, and the affections that you have in your heart, and the resolutions that you cherish in your will, are getting to be as firmly fixed as a piece of wood is fixed when it is petrified, or as water is fixed when it is turned to ice.

Now, I repeat, first, there are radical differences in the character. Second, these radical differences in character beget different courses of life. Third, these radical differences in character and differences in courses of life beget different conditions or states. And, fourth, if you get the character fixed, the condition is settled; and if a man cannot change his radical character he cannot change his radical condition. If he gets where he for ever hates holiness, he can never be a happy man. If he gets where he for ever loves holiness, he cannot be a wretched man. It is utterly out of the question. The love of holiness would make a heaven, and the love of sin would make a hell, if there were none already. Now, no one can dispute what I have said so far, and therefore you cannot dispute the next point, which is the last one—that there is no reason to believe that character will be changed beyond this world, if it is not changed in this world.

Let us see what influences there are in this world that change men and women radically. I think they may be all brought under the following heads: first, the knowledge of the truth; second, the voice of conscience; third, the voice of God; fourth, the power of association. Those four things are the great causes that change men radi-

cally. Sometimes a man has been ignorant, and he comes to a knowledge of the truth, and the truth is seen in a new light and seen in a new force, and has new effect upon him; and the consequence is that his character undergoes a radical change. Or sometimes a man comes to listen to the voice of conscience, where, otherwise, he has been accustomed to dismiss it. He stops and hearkens to the remonstrance of his moral sense, which says, "This is wrong. Do not do it. This is right. Do that which you know to be right." And he begins to listen. He sees that his conscience is right. He sees that the course of sin which he has been following has been leading him into misery and wretchedness. He sees that the right which he ought to have followed would have led him into corresponding conditions of happiness and well-being; and he begins to listen to his conscience; and conscience is a revolutionist. Conscience is a conspirator—not against God: it is a conspirator against the devil; and conscience has the power, if you will submit to it, to turn the empire of Satan upside down and put God on the throne where He belongs.

Then the third way in which men are changed in this world is by the obvious interposition of God. For instance, here comes a providence that smites, a judgment that convinces, an earthquake, an awful flood, a lightning stroke, and men begin to think that there is a God. They hear His voice in the thunder; they feel the throb of His great indignant heart in the earthquake; and they feel the rush of His awful wrath in devouring flames; and they begin to turn unto the Lord and seek after righteousness. Or, again, there is a power of association that changes them. Here, for instance, are a godly father and mother. They bring holy influences to bear upon a recreant son. The Bible is read; prayer is

offered; a holy example is set before the boy; and he comes by and by to feel the influence of that holy example. Perhaps he never goes astray from God from the beginning, because there has always been this restraining and guiding influence round about him. Now, you will all confess with me that the four great causes which turn men are these: the knowledge of the truth, the voice of conscience within, the voice of God's judgment; or, it may be, His Holy Word, or it may be His Divine Spirit without, or the associations of life that bring us into new lines of activity, and teach us the power of new forms of enjoyment, or, possibly, restrain from evil and guide in paths of righteousness and holiness. Now, if you have not been changed by these things in this world, have you any reason to believe that you will be changed by them in the life to come?

I want to make a solemn statement regarding people who are not children of God, and I want to speak as a brother and a friend. If they have learned to resist the truth here, have you any reason to believe that they would not resist it there? Have not they always had the voice of conscience? And if conscience does not lead men to God here, have you any reason to believe that it would lead them to God there? Is there going to be any tremendous power in the moral sense in eternity to change a character that it could not change here? If the providence of God here, if the messages of the Gospel here, if the strivings of the Spirit here, have not affected their moral and spiritual character, have you any reason to believe that they will be affected there? Is there any hint in the Word of God that the Holy Ghost is going to be in hell to urge sinners to repentance? Can you find a single passage in the Word of God that indicates that the work of the Spirit is to continue beyond the

bounds of the present life? If you can find it, I should like to see where it is, for I have never found it.

There is one solemn passage in the Book of Revelation that looks as though the time were coming when character is going to become unchanging. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still. And behold I come quickly to give every man according as his work shall be." If the tree falls it lies along the ground as it falls. It is never again erected. When a man falls at the throw of death, he lies as he falls. There is no hint in the Bible of a change of character beyond this world.

Perhaps some of you think that punishment in the next world will reform a sinner. Did you ever know punishment to reform a sinner here? I never did. God deals very gently and tenderly with us here even in chastisement and in judgment, because He wants to move the world to righteousness by the interposition of His hand. And yet you will find that when God sweeps with tremendous judgment over the earth as with the besom of destruction, men in a few hours, or days, go right along in their old courses of sin just as before, and there is nothing that is as speedily forgotten as the awful judgments of Almighty God. If you want to see in the Book of Revelation what God thinks about the power of punishment in the future state, read those awful words: "They gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven." Even while in the torment of their punishment, they gnawed their tongues like a madman in the intensest of suffering, they only blasphemed God.

I once lived between two neighbours, and I want to tell you about these two men as an illustration of my theme. Here was my house: here was one on the right

hand of me, and the other on the left of me; and those two men, although they lived close by each other and close by me, were as far apart as the east is from the west. They had radical differences in character. The man here was an industrious man: the man there was a lazy man. The man here was a gentle and good-tempered man: the man there was an abusive man. He abused even his own wife. The man here was an intelligent man and loved knowledge: the man there was an ignorant man and loved his ignorance. The man here had an aversion to strong drink, and even to tobacco; that man there was for ever drinking, and for ever smoking and chewing. This man was bringing up his child in the fear of God: that man would take his pipe out of his mouth and put it into the mouth of a little child eighteen months old, and teach the child to suck the pipe and get the taste of the tobacco, and learn while a baby the vicious indulgence. That man on the Sabbath day went to church to worship God; this man on the Sabbath day went out into the farms about to train horses. This man was open to every suggestion of virtue and purity; that man shut his ears to every remonstrance against his body-and-soul-destroying vices. This man loved Christ; that man blasphemed Him. This man studied his Bible; that man never looked at a page of it. This man was daily on his knees in prayer; that man never used the name of Christ except with curses and oaths. Radical differences of character. Not one solitary point in sympathy. And I saw these two men, during the time that I lived between them, getting farther and farther apart in character, farther and farther apart in course of life, farther and farther apart in tastes, and dispositions, and preferences, farther and farther apart in all that makes up the condition of a soul toward God and toward man.

Now, answer me this question, you unbeliever, you who say that this text of Scripture is one that any man ought to be ashamed to preach to you, and who, perhaps, say that the Bible ought to be ashamed to have such a text in it: you who say that, whatever else is true, eternal punishment is not true: you who, perhaps, dare to blaspheme and say that you would not have a God that was such a God. Let me hear you answer my question. Take these two neighbours of mine. I have no malice against either of them. I love the one, and I love the soul of the other, and I have sat down and talked with him about his own spiritual condition, and sought to lead him to a better life. I love both these men. I think I can honestly say that I would die for that neighbour, who is destroying body and soul, if my death would save him. But it is a perfectly patent fact that those two men are facing different ways, and that they are going different ways, and that they are bound to go different ways. Now, answer me one question. If these men die and continue to go on different ways—if beyond this life there is nothing radically to change the character of that man, who is a vicious, idle, lazy, worthless, ignorant, unprincipled man, I would like to tell you what is likely to bring these men together in the hereafter-life, since nothing has ever brought them together in this life? If you put that other neighbour of mine over there in hell, he would start a prayer-meeting. If you put that neighbour of mine in heaven he would gather, if it were possible, someone else to him to help him blaspheme. Put Cain and Abel together. Could they live together? There is no use in disputing God.

I firmly believe that, while we fight the doctrine of eternal punishment, that doctrine is laid not only in the Word of God, but in the basis of the human constitution. Character is radically different. Conduct follows

character. Course of life is determined by character and conduct. Condition depends on character. If you get character where it cannot change, you get condition where it cannot change; and therefore if before the throne of God men simply part to go different ways, as in this world, they will part to go different ways, and if they continue to go different ways for ever, that will settle eternally the condition of everlasting happiness on the one hand, and the condition of everlasting misery on the other hand.

I have not referred to the divine side at all, because I wanted to call your attention to the human side. I have not dwelt on revelation, because I want to appeal to reason. I have not talked of supernatural law, because I wanted to appeal to natural law and to bring you back to ask yourselves this question: when I find the awful testimony of God, is not that testimony confirmed in the mouth of two or three awful witnesses—my reason on the one hand and my conscience on the other?

In conclusion, I would indicate the only source of deliverance from the searching significance of this text. First of all, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, said these words. It gave Him no pleasure to say these words. They were wrenched from Him by the awful necessity of being true to souls. There is salvation for you in the same blessed Christ that said, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal." And the only salvation for you is in a radical change of character. "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." If you will come to Christ for a new heart, if you will get your notions of things changed, and your affections changed, and your resolutions changed, if you will get new tastes, new spiritual tastes, a relish for something which you have hated, and a disrelish for something which you have

loved, then you turn square round in your course. Your back has been to God, but your face shall be toward Him. Your face has been toward hell, but it shall henceforth be toward heaven, and a radical change in your spiritual tastes shall generate a radical change in your condition, your course of life, your destiny; and so, as you turn about to God, you shall find that destiny has turned about for you—that hell is shut against you, and heaven is open for you.

XV

Expiation and Consecration

“ We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead ” [all died], “ and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again.”—2 *Corinthians* v. 14 and 15.

THE Word of God is full of little gospels or brief presentations of the great leading truths of redemption in a very few words. These two verses form one of the most remarkable of these brief statements which we may call epitomes of gospel truth. No one can read these two verses without being struck at once with the great prominence that is here given to what is known as substitutionary sacrifice. Here, in a very brief compass, we have three times the expression used “ died for.” “ We thus judge, that if One died for all,” then again “ that He died for all,” and then again “ Who died for them.” Such repetition as this certainly means emphasis. It holds up Jesus Christ to us in the compass of these two verses three times, as a substitute for sinners, and not only so, but as dying as such a substitute.

Then, again, I would have you notice the difference in the way in which this truth is put in the two conspicuous members of this sentence. In the first case He is represented as dying for all, and we are represented as dying in Him. Not a word is said about resurrection ; not a

word is said about life again from the dead. But in the latter portion of this statement we seem almost to lose sight of the death feature altogether in the feature of life. "And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto Him which died for them and rose again."

Now the question arises at once before we can go any farther into the depth of the subject, Why did the apostle, under the guidance of the Spirit, so construct this statement of truth as to leave out of the first part of it entirely all reference to Christ's resurrection or the life of believers in Him, and in the second part to emphasize particularly His resurrection and the life of the believer in Him? It only shows us how the whole Word of God is intimately bound together, and how one part of Scripture helps to illuminate and illustrate another. There are some people who never look into the Old Testament. They feel as though the Old Testament belonged to a past dispensation; but the New Testament, which rings with the sound of grace, they delight in, though how you are ever going to understand the New Testament if you do not understand the Old is a mystery to me, for if it be true, as it is, that the New Testament is latent in the Old—lies there like a hidden germ—it is also true that the Old Testament is patent in the New—lies on the surface.

You cannot understand a passage like this without understanding Leviticus, that much-disputed book that some people would make us believe, if they could, hardly belongs at all among the inspired portions of the Word of God. In the opening chapters of Leviticus you have the great law of sacrifice and offerings. I cannot go now into detail with regard to it, but carefully notice and keep always in mind the distinction between the sin offering and the trespass offering which were,

properly speaking, sacrifices, and the burnt offering and the thank offering which were more especially designated as offerings. The great difference between these two classes lies in this—that the first ones mentioned, the sin offering and the trespass offering, were regarded as so identified with sin that they represented something that was abhorrent in the eyes of God and upon which God looked, as it were, with a look of indignation. The victims that represented the sin offering and the trespass offering were taken without the camp. They were regarded as unclean, and the word which is applied to them, which is translated “burn,” means to burn to ashes. The idea is that the victim was wholly consumed, nothing left of it but ashes, and even the ashes represented that which was unclean. But in the whole burnt offering where the victim was presented to God as an emblem and symbol of the consecration of the offerer, the word “burn” which is applied to it is a different Hebrew word, and it means to ascend in flame; and there is a beautiful suggestion about this—that, while God’s indignation rested on the sin offering as the representation of sin, and the offering went to ashes, with no suggestion of an ascending sacrifice, no sweet savour going up to God but an unpleasant scent, as it were, in His nostrils, in the burnt offering there is no suggestion whatever of being turned to ashes merely. The offering is represented as going up in the flame of fire, and being accepted in the sense of a sweet savour to God. Now you see that while, in the first class of offerings mentioned, there is no suggestion of a life that comes out of death, in the second there is a suggestion of life that comes out of death. While the first class of offerings mentioned makes no suggestion of resurrection, you cannot get rid of the idea of resurrection when you think of the burnt sacrifice, the whole burnt offering.

I mention this now because it is a help in the understanding of a great many passages of Scripture outside of Leviticus ; and it is impossible, in my judgment, to understand the passage now before us if we do not grasp this conception ; and because I want it to be in your mind all the way through let me repeat once more the substance of it. The sin offering and trespass offering regarded as unclean went to ashes, and the word "burnt" signifies nothing more than to burn them, to burn them to ashes. But the burnt offering was regarded as a symbol of the accepted service of a believing child of God ; and, therefore, though it was consumed on the altar, the word "burnt" means to ascend in flame as a sweet savour, and so suggests the idea that out of the death represented in the burnt offering there comes a life of service to God, a resurrection out of ashes.

Now, if we understand that the first statement in this text, "He died for all," represents Christ as the sin offering and the trespass offering, and the second statement, "He died for all," represents Him as the burnt offering, we can readily understand why, in the first statement, no reference is made to life, and why, in the second part of the statement, the emphasis is upon "rose again" and living unto God.

This is so important that I shall dwell upon it for a few moments before passing to the practical thoughts which are here suggested.

There are two things which Jesus Christ has done for the believer. The first is that He has been "made sin for us though He knew no sin" ; and the second is that in Him we are made the righteousness of God.

The first is expiation, the second is consecration. The first is putting away penalty ; the second is putting away the power of sin, and finally the presence of sin. The first is getting iniquity out of our hearts, and the second

is preparing us to take an active part in the service of our glorified Lord.

He died for us all, and "we thus judge, that if One died for all, then all died." That is to say, if Christ was your representative and mine, if He bore up our sins in His own body on the Cross—not His own sins, for He had none to atone for, but the weight of a world's sin—then when He died as the sin offering and the trespass offering your sin and my sin was consumed. The body of sin that had held us in dominion, in bondage, was turned to ashes. Henceforth there is no longer penalty of the law that overhangs us, for the penalty was expiated. Henceforth there is no longer the tyranny of sin to be exercised in us, for the arms of sin have been broken, and the very body of sin has been burnt to ashes. There is no longer the curse of sin on us, for that curse without the camp has been expiated, and the wrath of God has been endured for our sins.

But if Jesus Christ presented Himself as a willing sacrifice to God as the type of the very believers He had redeemed, if on the cross there hung not only an offering for sin but a representation of saved believers, then there must come out of His grave a risen Christ, and in Him we emerge out of our graves, rising to newness of life. Now, a child can understand that. It is perfectly simple and perfectly intelligible, and the whole heart of the gospel is right here.

Now that I have made this brief word of explanation about this text, our thoughts will naturally be drawn now for a few moments to speak, first, of our death, and second, of our life.

First, our death. It is a threefold death, and the life is a threefold life. It is a death, first of all, unto sin; second, a death unto the world; and third, a death unto self. It is, first, a life in the Spirit;

second, a life unto God, and, third, a life for man. Just a few words about each of these departments of thought.

I.

First, a death unto sin. He died for all, and in Him all died. Not only penalty put away, but power put away too, for there is no perfect salvation that delivers from penalty only. A perfect salvation must deliver us from the dominion of sin also. The tyrant must be burnt to ashes so that he can no longer sway his sceptre over you and me. That is the force of what the Apostle Paul says in this sixth chapter of Romans. He says: "He that is dead is freed from sin." "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin." That is, in Christ you judicially die. Now, be actually dead even as you are judicially dead. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, in God's eyes every believer that trusts in Him also died. Now, inasmuch as God, as your judge, reckons you to be dead, count yourselves to be dead, and, therefore, do not reckon on a life of sin. If you are a dead man how are you going to act? If you are a dead man how can your former tyrant expect to find in you a living servant? Now, let the devil understand this: "I am a dead man henceforth; therefore thou hast no claim over me for obedience. Sin is dead to me and I am dead to sin, and as God counts me dead I will count myself dead." You are judicially dead, then be dead.

Do you think that this is strange language? Not at all. Perfectly apprehensible and perfectly comprehensible. God accounts you as no longer a sinner, because Christ died for you. He counts you a saint. Now, as in the book of God's remembrance your sins have been blotted out, and they are no longer represented against you, inasmuch as Jesus Christ, in breaking the power of the devil has broken his sceptre so that you are

no longer in terror of it, you must think of yourself as a dead man so far as sin is concerned, and as, therefore, no longer finding in yourself the possibility of yielding service to him who is dead to you and to whom you are dead—the devil. In other words, I must regard myself as henceforth set apart unto God, the old man dead and no longer to be thought of, no longer to be reckoned on, no longer to have a place made for him in the economy of my life. I am to think of him as a dead tyrant who can no longer exercise power over me, and before whom I am no longer to bow. And to think of sin as dead, and to think of myself as dead to sin and only alive unto God through Jesus Christ my Lord, turns my thoughts into the new channel of service and makes the whole life to be treated as a past life, renounced and denounced and for ever put away.

In the second place, we are to die unto the world. There is a very remarkable expression used by the Apostle Paul in the 6th chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians: "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto to the world." It is the double crucifixion that I call attention to—that in Jesus Christ the world is crucified to me and I am crucified unto the world. I am on the cross and the world is beholding. Crucifixion was a painful and ignominious death. It was mainly a death to which slaves and traitors and conspirators were subject. "Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree" was the old proverb. They did not crucify a Roman general if they wanted to put him to death. Nobody would have thought of crucifying Cæsar. Some method of taking away such distinguished men as they were must be less ignominious than crucifixion. But when they wanted to make a slave and a malefactor of Christ and hold Him to derision, they

hung Him by hands and by feet with nails to the cross. The cross was connected with shame. To be crucified unto the world means to be made hateful and to be a derision to the world. And to have the world crucified to me implies that the world becomes an object of hatred and derision to me. And there is this double death. The world is dead to me, and I am dead to the world. We are mutually made detestable and abhorrent to each other. The world is crucified to me when I no longer can see attractions in it. The things I used to love I no longer love. The pleasures I used to follow have lost their charm. The treasures I used to seek to amass have been resigned for the treasure that has been laid up in heaven where moth nor dust corrupts not and thieves do not break in and steal. The old things are passed away, and all things have become new. New tastes have been developed so that the old dainties now are sickening to me, and the things I once revolted from are my meat and drink. So the world has been put on the cross and nailed there, and I look at it and deride it, and I hate it and I abhor it, and I wonder that it ever had any charms for me, the ugly thing that crucified my Lord, and that I have now hung on His cross as an object of my sneers and my hatred. And I am crucified to the world because I am a new man in Christ Jesus, and not after the worldly pattern. The world cannot find in me the charm it once found, or the attractions it once found, or the sympathy it once found, or the service it once found. I do not now yield myself to the world, and the world hates me because I am not of the world. The world loves its own, but the world crucifies those that are not its own; and if I am no longer the world's, it has nailed me to the cross as a malefactor, and it passes by and wags its head in hateful and malicious derision.

Does that description correspond to you? I think

I have known a great many nominal disciples that the world did not seem to hate particularly, and that did not seem to hate the world particularly. I think there might be some who called themselves Christians, who might rather say, if they told the truth, "The world is courted by me, and I am courted by the world. We walk up and down arm-in-arm, like friends, and we have a good time in each other's society." Not so Paul. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." And he says in that same chapter, "Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creation. Old things are passed away; all things are become new." If you can say the one thing with regard to yourself, you surely can say the other, and if you cannot say the one you cannot say the other.

In the third place, we die to self. That is the hardest death of all and the last death of all. You think that you have killed sin, but you find that self lives nine lives if it does not live ninety; and when you think that you have struck a fatal blow at self it comes up again in another form. For instance, you are a very proud man, and you do all you can to humble yourself, or, if you would use the correct expression, *humiliate* yourself, for it is very much easier to humiliate yourself than it is to humble yourself. When Lyman Beecher was coming home from a service at which his son had preached in his own pulpit, the son, walking along with his father, said, "Father, I made a miserable failure this morning. I am very much humbled." "Oh, fudge, fudge," said Dr. Beecher, "you are only humiliated." The discrimination was a true discrimination. To be humble means to become humble. To be humiliated means only to get down in prostration. And many a man is more proud

in his prostration while he is humiliating himself than he was before. He thinks, "Why, what great things I am doing to make myself humble." Yes, self keeps coming up all the time. You are proud; you try to become humble; and then you become proud of your humility. You were selfish and you try to become unselfish, and now you become selfishly unselfish. That is to say, the very things that you do in an apparently unselfish spirit you have a selfish motive in doing, just as a great many people will give a man money for the sake of reputation. Why, I can remember when people used to go round begging money for benevolent charities of different sorts, and they would tell you, "Now, if you give £20 we will put your name on a published list of donors at the end, and if you will give the largest sum of all your name will stand at the head of the list of donors. That is "Be unselfish, and you will get a selfish reward." There are thousands of forms of selfishness. You appear to put it down, and it rises up again, and it rises up stronger for the very apparent humiliation it has undergone; and so, down beneath all our apparent sacrifice, down beneath all our apparent sanctification, there lies this last element, the most difficult of all to reach, and the most difficult of all to approach—self, love of self, self-aggrandisement, self-advancement, self-glorying, self-seeking, self in some one of its myriad forms. All your sins you may cut away, apparently, as you cut away the branches from a tree, but as long as the love of self is left it is like a root out of which, after you have cut the branches off, a thousand branches may spring to take the place of what you cut off. And so the Apostle Paul here says, speaking by the Spirit, that "Christ died for all, that we who live should not henceforth live unto ourselves." The difference between the worldly man and the disciple is that the one lives to himself and the other lives unto God.

II.

Finally, let us notice the other part of the subject—our life. We are dead to sin, dead to the world, dead to self, if we are truly Christ's. But how about your three-fold life?

In the first place, it is to be a life by the Spirit and in the Spirit. The Spirit of God is a new element in which we are to live. You know there is what is called a metamorphosis in insect life. A great change or transformation takes place. For instance, you go round in the summer season, and you will see a caterpillar living on the surface of a leaf or on the grass, the sward, picking up refuse matter, decayed matter, or sucking the juices of leaves. By and by that caterpillar takes up a position on a tree or on the bark of a tree, or perhaps wraps itself in a leaf and weaves about itself a curious envelope known as a cocoon. He abides there in an absolutely dormant condition, apparently lifeless, for a certain time, and then some day you will hear a sound on the top of this cocoon—something picking away at it, trying to force its way out, and, if you notice carefully, there emerges from this envelope a winged moth or butterfly. It stands on the top of the cocoon, and spreads its wings perhaps six or seven inches across. Now, henceforth it is going to live an entirely different life. It used to crawl. Now it is going to fly. It used to live on decayed matter. Now it is going to live on honey. It used to drag its length along on the ground. Now it is going to wing its way in the sunshine and the air. It has got a new element and is living a new life. It is transformed. Now, a disciple of Jesus Christ used to be a caterpillar. He is going to be a butterfly. He used to live down on the earth; now he is going to live in the sunshine and live altogether in the air. He used to live

on old decayed matter ; now he is going to live on honey. New life in the Spirit, new tastes, new faculties, new powers, new privileges, new appetites, and new affinities. The old things are left below. The new things are from above. And, just as that butterfly is going to have in himself the air of heaven, and going to move in the air, this disciple is going to have now the Spirit of God in him, and he is going to move in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is going to be his element henceforth. He is going to live in the Spirit. He is going to find the Spirit the very means by which he floats and moves and wings his way Godward, and the very power by which he goes from blossom to blossom of the world and gets the sweets of the nectarine.

Now, in the second place, we are to live unto God ; that is, as the Spirit of God in us becomes the source of life, God becomes the object of life. We have got an eye on another centre now, and we are moving round another centre. There are some people that try to live very intimately in fellowship with God, and other people call them eccentric. A blessed thing to be called eccentric if it is because you differ from the world round about you and even worldly Christians. It is a very easy and common and cheap way of sneering at devoted saints to say that they are very peculiar. Well, God means to have a "peculiar people." A pity that more of us are not peculiar. "Oh, but then they are unpractical." Well, a blessed thing to be unpractical if that means that I cannot conform myself to the practice of a great many nominal disciples. "Oh, well it is theoretical." A blessed thing to be theoretical if the theory is found in the Word of God, and under the teaching of the Spirit, and if I reach after a nobler life. "Oh, but then he is an ideal Christian." I wish that there were a great many more that have the divine ideal before them trying to reach up

towards it. "Well, he is trying to be perfect." Would to God that you all would. There is no danger of your ever being perfect here. But it is a blessed thing to put perfection before you and strive towards the absolute sinlessness of a holy life.

We may sneer as we please at those who live in the fellowship of God day by day, and who have lost their hold upon this world because they have got a hold on God. Oh, that is the most precious life to lead, and, as I said before, would to God a great many more were living that same life. I have used the word "eccentric." It means out of centre. A mechanic will understand that where, in a piece of machinery, most of the parts seem to move and do move round a single centre, as though they were all poised on one pivot, here is a portion of the machinery that is out of the centre and has another pivot of its own. Now, Keith Falconer, that noble young man who died in Arabia in starting a mission among the Mahommedans, said, "Let people call you eccentric. Eccentric means nothing more than out of centre, and if you have got a new centre in God of course you are out of the old centre of the world. Let the world's machinery move round the old centre. You have begun to move by that eccentric movement about quite another pivot than that around which the world moves." Yes, let us live unto God. Put Him before us, set Him in the front of our being, God first in everything, God always first in everything, God cheerfully first in everything. That is what makes us stalwart and mighty Christians.

My third remark is that we must live for man. That is to say, here is the sphere of service. We are in the world to do the world good. We are in the Church to do the Church good. We are among the human family to be a blessing to the human family. And the man who has got the Spirit of God in him and moves in that Spirit is

in a new element. A man that has got that before him, and who lives unto God, is the man that is prepared to live for humanity in the very largest and best sense. I like that expression, "for humanity." A man does not understand what service is as long as he allows discriminations to be between man and man. Ben Jonson, on one occasion, received a present of a crown piece (five shillings) from King James. He said to the person that brought it to him, "King James sends Ben Jonson, the poet, five shillings, because the poor poet lives in an alley, and the king lives in a palace. Go back and tell the king that his soul lives in an alley." There are a great many people who live in palaces, but whose souls live in alleys, and there are a great many people living in alleys, but whose souls live in the palace of the King.

Now, I tell you, that you can never be largely used for service in the kingdom of God till you get these notions of aristocracy out of you—until you learn not to call any man common or unclean—until you learn to think of souls as immortal souls, and the very lowest of them all down in the mire of this world, like a diamond in the filth, worth Christ's stooping down from heaven to pluck up the diamond out of the mud. It is for man you want to live and not for rich people, not for cultured people, not for people in high positions, not for kings on thrones. You want to have such a love for man as man that the beggar in his hut or hovel is just as precious to you as the king on his throne or the prince in his palace.

And so we are not to live unto ourselves but unto God, living for the whole race of man. The Hottentot, the lowest possible specimen of humanity, ought to attract the child of God more, if possible, than the highest specimen. Why? Because it is the lowest specimen of humanity that needs

lifting the most and that is in most danger because in most degradation, and the love of God goes out to those that need it most, and the love that is like God's goes out to those that need it most. Elizabeth Fry, who made herself famous in London by her interposition for degraded women in Newgate, and who went, refined woman as she was, and put herself in the midst of filth and misery, and temptation, and who taught these women, and established schools, and reformed the whole prison discipline as well as the whole prison manners—Elizabeth Fry left it on record as the result of her whole life-work: "Never since I was seventeen years old have I ever woke up night or day without asking first of all this question: 'How can I, in the time before me, more perfectly serve my Master and uplift the fallen?'"

If every one of us would ask that question with every waking hour, with every new morning, what glorious triumphs might be achieved by some of us who have never known service hitherto. When Jerome of Prague was in the midst of the fires of martyrdom he was heard to say, as he lifted up his face and looked in the heaven so soon to receive him, "My soul in flames I offer up, O Christ, to Thee." And Miss Willard, on her birthday, the leader of the great temperance host of women in America, and one of the noblest women that American civilisation ever produced, wrote solemnly in her diary: "This day I undertake, in the strength of the Holy Ghost, to realize what it means to lay my body, soul, and spirit on God's altar, a living sacrifice unto Him."

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